

THE REFORM OF EDUCATION IN ROMANIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

GEORGETA STOIAN CONNOR

(Under the direction of Kavita Pandit)

ABSTRACT

Romania, like all former communist countries in Europe, is undergoing many important transformations from the communist system to democracy. One major change since the events of the 1989 revolution is the reshaping of the educational system at all levels to bring it into line with practices of western countries. There is official recognition of the need for a new and modern educational system, with significant implications for the teaching of geography and other subjects in secondary school. Geography has been and remains an important subject of study at all educational levels in Romanian schools. Viewing educational reform as primarily curricular reform, this study focuses on the main characteristics of the new geography curriculum for secondary schools, a curriculum that represents a shift from the traditional geography, a descriptive one, to a modern geography, a geography for life.

INDEX WORDS: Romania, Communism, Revolution, Transition, Educational reform,
Secondary schools, Geography curriculum

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my husband, Donald W. Connor, without whose support, financially and spiritually, I could not have pursued my graduate work at the University of Georgia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Romania, like all former communist countries in Europe, is undergoing many important transformations as it moves from the communist system to democracy. One of these transformations is the reshaping of the educational system at all levels. According to Kaser and Phillips (1992), when it comes to reforming an educational system, the imperative of tradition provides not only a stimulus for change but also a strong opposition to any attempts at reform. Finally, the new developments in Romania allowed and even demanded change.

As has been emphasized by Sandi (1992, p.83), Romanian education is faced with the double task of developing a more democratic system: on the one hand, taking into account the new education requirements and, on the other hand, considering the rules of the market economy. Against a background dominated by poverty, traditional French influences, and especially the problems created by 45 years of the communist ideology, it would be interesting to understand the relationship between the power transfer and educational reform. From this perspective, Birzea (1996) has taken into consideration two basic dilemmas faced by countries in transition: continuity versus breaking down and stability versus change.

In Romania, continuity is represented, first, by the period between World War I and World War II, a time characterized by traditional education, with public and private

schools with strong French influences. It was interrupted by the events at the end of World War II that led to the setting up of the communist dictatorship. The second period of continuity is the communist era, which dominated the political life in Romania especially between 1947 and 1989. It was a long and unhappy period of continuity in Romanian history in which the education system was shaped, especially, by the 1948, 1968, and 1978 educational reforms. The 1948 reform, through its provisions, broke the interwar education system while the other two reforms, 1968 and 1978, although brought significant changes, they upgraded in fact the same system, communist educational system. Finally, the 1989 democratic revolution broke the communist system and created the foundation for democratic educational reform.

Thus, stability has been maintained by the continuity of the political, economic, and social systems while the changes through educational reforms are due to the breaking down of these systems. In order to maintain equilibrium during the new reform development, Romania has chosen to adopt “change-controlled” policies and a “social protection” priority, which results in a slower process of change as compared to “shock therapy,” solutions chosen by other ex-communist countries such as Poland and Czech Republic.

Birzea (1996, p. 98) identified four types of reform resulting from the interaction of the two polarities:

	Continuity	Breaking off
Stability	Modernization Reform	Corrective Reform
Change	Structural Reform	Systemic Reform

Corrective Reform refers to the spontaneous reaction against the old political system. In the case of education it involves the immediate correction of the major characteristics of communist education. Modernization Reform focuses on changing only the content and methods of education (curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, and educational standards) without affecting the structure and institutions. Structural Reform has a larger spectrum of problems in changing the content and the legal and managerial framework of education and includes issues such as legislation, management, teacher training, and quality control. Finally, Systemic Reform represents global reform with regard to fundamental changes in the educational system: structure, decision making, type of institution, and relationship to the social system.

During the communist regime geography was a prominent subject in Romanian secondary schools. The provisions of the modernization and structural reforms, through the content and flexibility of the new geography curriculum, brought several qualitative improvements to this subject of study, a situation indicating a significant shift from the traditional geography to a modern one.

Educational change in any circumstances is a highly complex and difficult matter. When these changes take place in conjunction with a transformation from a totalitarian communist system to an open society with a free market economy, as in Romania's case, this complexity is significantly accentuated. Romania is still involved in a transitional process, therefore education should be seen in close relation to the socio-economic, cultural, and political changes. At the same time, I have appreciated the reform of education as a part of the restructuring of attitudes that the transformation of the Romanian system seems to need.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore Romania's educational inheritance from the communist regime and to emphasize the characteristics of the present educational system, in light of the latest reform of education, with emphasis on significant implications for the teaching of geography. More specifically, I will identify several major elements characterizing the Romanian education system during the period 1944-1989. I will follow Sandi's (1992) scheme by classifying these elements into three groups: the objectives of education, the management of education, and the resources allocated to education. I will also explore and analyze the strategies, stages, and objectives of Romania's democratic reform of education and how it has affected the teaching of geography.

Three research questions are posed:

- (1) What were the main characteristics of the communist educational system during the period 1944-1989?
- (2) How has educational reform since 1989 been developed and implemented?
- (3) What were the essential features of geography as a subject of study in schools under the Romanian communist regime and how are the provisions of democratic reform reflected in the teaching of geography in secondary schools?

These research questions will be addressed using qualitative methodology in the form of document and literature analysis.

Methodology

Historical Analysis

The study which falls within the field of Comparative and International Education, employs a historical design methodology. A defining aspect of historical analysis, according to Frankel and Wallen (2000, p. 573), is that “it focuses exclusively on past occurrences and events.” In this light, my research focuses on the educational characteristics of the communist era and the major changes occurring in the educational system after the 1989 democratic revolution. Thus this study is bounded in several ways: (a) by my theoretical perspective; (b) by my conceptual and analytical framework; (c) in time, with focus on the period from 1944 to 2002; and (d) spatially, referring to the Romanian territory. In order to be open to a wide range of descriptions, the study is open-ended and flexible.

I chose to take a historical approach for several reasons. First, education in the former communist countries, particularly Romania, because of isolation from the international community, has received little attention to date from Western educators. Second, Romania, like all countries in the former Soviet bloc, has a rich tradition of education that should be presented to other countries. In this light, I attempt through this study to make people aware of the major shifts in Romanian education after both events the World War II and the 1989 democratic revolution. Also, I try to explain how the educational systems were shaped by specific educational reforms and developed during both political regimes, communist and democracy. This will allow educators to learn lessons from the failures and successes of both systems.

In addition, my years of experience in Romanian schools both before and after 1989 have given insights into both educational systems, and an opportunity to incorporate the educational reforms into my practice. I draw from these experiences at various points during the discussion. It is my hope that these personal observations will be of value to other researchers interested in learning educational policies and practices in Romania. Overall my study seeks to contribute to the growing body of scholarship examining post-communist educational transformations and issues of implementation.

Data Sources

In this research, the characteristics of Romanian education were studied by perusing documents of the respective historical periods or related to this time. My data are primarily Romanian and international publications (books and articles); policy documents, legislation, and reports; curricula and related materials: instructional materials (e.g., syllabuses, textbooks); and examination instructions and guidelines for teachers. For more current analysis and comparison, I also took into consideration information from the Romanian media (<http://www.ziare.com>), several letters from Romanian geography teachers, my school experience as a Romanian geography teacher, and data published by international organizations such as OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), World Bank, and UNDR (United Nation Development Report). In order to compare some aspects of Romanian and American geography education in secondary schools, I used information in my internship portfolio, from National Geographic and NCGE (National Council for Geographic Education) resources, and from my personal observations.

Also, I would like to emphasize the major task of accurately translating the obtained information from Romanian into English work which required appreciable effort. I assembled a large number of Romanian sources, extracted information from them, and translated them into English. This task considerably lengthened the time needed for data analysis and writing.

For this historical study, data collection and data analysis were a simultaneous process that in fact extended over a 2-year period. My observations of the present events in Romanian education, the discussions with my former colleagues about the practical realities in their schools, and the correlation between the multiplicity of data sources constituted an ongoing process and, therefore, I had to be diligent in the selection, storage, and retrieval of research information. I am aware of some gaps in the bibliographical information related to communist education, inconsistencies in some of the references, and even the possibility of developing new research questions that will guide subsequent rounds of data collection.

Positionality of the Researcher

As researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; therefore, it is necessary to identify my personal values and assumptions. Holding a bachelor's degree in Geography from the University of Bucharest, Romania, studying four years in a doctoral program in economic and human geography, obtaining all didactical grades in geography (tenure, grade II, and grade I), with certification (grades 5 - 12) specifically in the Romanian education system, I also bring my content knowledge of geography and my secondary teaching experience to the research setting, a fact that I believe enhances data collection and analysis. Thus, I attempt to be quite clear about my

perspective and assumptions in the study and make every effort to present a balanced report by using multiple sources.

Organization of the Study

Following this chapter, Chapter 2 examines the literature regarding Romanian education during the communist era. Chapter 3 addresses the second research question by undertaking an analysis of the democratic reform of education after the 1989 revolution. Chapter 4 conducts a comparative analysis of geography as a subject of study taught in both communist and democratic secondary schools, with emphasis on the reform implications for the geography curriculum. The thesis ends with a summary of the findings, conclusions, and other issues related to the research questions.

CHAPTER 2

ROMANIAN EDUCATION DURING THE COMMUNIST ERA

The communist era in Romania covered the period from the end of World War II, in August of 1944, until December 1989. Although there are few studies in English examining Romanian education during the time of the communist regime, there is ample published literature concerning education in the Eastern European region as a whole. These and supplementary publications in Romanian are relevant to this study. A review of this literature was essential to the research in that the information obtained provided a conceptual framework for the study and direction for the research, and also aided in the interpretation of the data and research findings.

Educational Characteristics in Communist Romania

Background and Overall View

During World War II, with the exception of the University of Bucharest, the activities of the Romanian schools and universities were dramatically disrupted both due to the destruction during the war and due to the ensuing boundary changes'. More than half of all university buildings and libraries as well many schools were pillaged or were destroyed by the Russian or German bombardments. Universities in Transylvania and Northern Bukovina, due to the foreign occupation, either closed down or moved their activities to safer places. According to Sadlak (1991), the University of Iasi was moved to Alba Iulia, in Transylvania, because of the damages to its buildings and laboratories, and returned to Iasi only in May of 1945. Between 1940 and 1944 Northern Transylvania

became part of Hungary, and as a consequence the University of Cluj was displaced to Sibiu, a town in Southern Transylvania, and to Timisoara, in Banat. In Northern Bukovina, the Soviet authorities closed down the University of Cernauti between June 1940 and June 1941, and at the end of 1944 it was incorporated into the Soviet higher education system, with classes conducted in Russian and Moldavian (Romanian written with the Cyrillic alphabet).

In 1940, a dictatorial, pro-Nazi government, allied with the Iron Guard legionnaires and led by the Marshal Ion Antonescu, was set up in Romania. Students and faculty who professed democracy became victims of repressive measures. The most terrifying action took place at the end of November 1940 when more than 60 politicians and academics were assassinated. Among them was the well-known political and academic thinker Professor Nicolae Iorga, whose death represented a tremendous loss for Romanian education. It also triggered a popular uprising, following which the army suppressed the Iron Guard and installed a new military government in 1941. Thereafter, political life and academic autonomy were partially restored.

During the war and immediately afterwards, both higher education and pre-university institutions were confronted with many problems - such as under-funding, damaged school buildings, and a general shortage of textbooks and teaching aids - that seriously affected the educational process. But, as Sadlak (1991, p. 204) noted, quoting Stefan Pascu, former Rector of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, in spite of all these difficulties, all Romanian universities were “centers of resistance against fascism and war,” an example being the Anti-War Memorandum, signed in April of 1944 by 66 intellectuals, some of whom were university professors. The political situation changed

after August 23rd, 1944, the date of the national anti-fascist insurrection, when Romania joined forces with the Allies. Unfortunately, this event opened the country to Soviet influence and introduced the communist system that dominated Romanian education until 1989.

After the end of the 1940s, educational policies in Romania, as in most Eastern European countries, were oriented toward the “Soviet model.” This orientation resulted in uniformity of the education system inside the “socialist bloc,” even though Romania claimed autonomy during the Ceausescu era with its increasing chauvinistic and nepotistic developments (Mitter, 1992). More precisely, the Stalinist model in education (centralized, authoritarian) was adopted in Romania with the 1948 Reform of Education. As a result, “progressive education has been denounced as bourgeois and reactionary and its historical connections with the socialist movement in education have been retouched or denied” (Anweiler, 1992, p. 34). This educational program of the “bureaucratic pedagogy” was a radical one, with its denial of human rights, therefore, before December 1989, change was hardly an accepted concept in the Romanian official language.

As has been emphasized by Mitter (1992, p.16), the education system in Romania under the Soviet hegemony shared a number of common features with Eastern European countries which were based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine and on educational theories and practices that were claimed to constitute “socialist attainment” or “socialist performance,” such as the “uniform school” as well as the “polytechnic education.” But these common features did not prevent the existence of some variations in Romanian education practice, such as specific types of schools, different delimitations of the

separate horizontal stages, and the implementation of curricular and examination procedures.

Although Austro-Hungarian school policy and French influences have left significant traces in Romanian education, the influence of the Soviet school was very strong. However, many Romanian national specific and regional traditions that existed before the War, have continued to “survive,” some of them were very well preserved.

Major Characteristics and Issues

The “heritage” of the communist regime is often considered the most important factor in explaining the difficulties faced by reforms in Central and Eastern European countries. A long range of aspects of this heritage can be identified in Romania as well, most were of a sociological nature and, according to Cerych (1995), failing under the heading of “inertia of acquired attitudes and behavior patterns.” As has been emphasized by Sandi (1992), the “heritage” of the communist regime confronting the Romanian educational reform plan comprises several major elements which might have an important impact upon one another. She individualized them into three categories of issues: the objectives of education, the management of education, and the resources allocated to education.

The former regime, between 1944 and 1989, established several educational objectives which were determined primarily by political interest in Romanian development. The communist government hoped to produce educated people that would be adapted to the needs of a uniform society. Thus the objectives of education were often changed or updated. Generalization of compulsory education, for instance, has

influenced several times the structure of the Romanian educational system. As a major goal, compulsory education was extended. First, from four to seven, through the educational reform of 1948 and, subsequently, up to eight years of age. Later, the 1968 reform raised the limit of compulsory schooling from eight to ten years, a measure which began during the 1969-1970 school year and was expected to be completed by 1976-1977. Finally, according to the Decision of the Romanian Communist Party from 1973, general secondary education had to be extended, as a compulsory school, until 1985 from ten to twelve years. This measure was valid the entire period before the 1989 democratic revolution. Compulsory general education of twelve years was conceived as “the most comprehensive subsystem of Romanian education” (Ministry of Education, 1973, p. 20). According to the communist official position, this process “is oriented toward developing the students’ general-culture foundation, as well as technological knowledge and working skills” (Ministry of Education, 1973, p.22).

Although toward generalization of the compulsory education there are still many disputable arguments, this ample action has remarkably contributed to diminishing the illiteracy, especially, the problem of adult illiteracy. According to Human Development Report (2001), in 1999, the literacy rate for the Romanian population over 15 year of age was 98 %. This leads to conclude that a considerable progress was made in education before 1989 (the sacrifice of the Romanian population, teachers’ humiliation, and antidemocratic communist methods used for reaching this goal are beyond this paper’s scope).

Consequently, the education structure has been changed and upgraded several times. For instance, the 1948 Education Reform provisions established as gymnasium to

comprise grades 5th through 7th and upper secondary level grades 8th through 11th. The 1968 Reform of Education established the middle school as 5th through 8th grades and high school as 9th through 12th grades, with the first level, as junior, which encompassed 9th and 10th grades respectively. After the school year of 1974-1975 all eighth grade graduates entered their first year of high school (Minister of Education, 1973, p.10).

In Romania, the twelve-grade education structure comprises the following levels (Figure 2.1):

- Preschool Education for children between 3 and 6 years.
- Compulsory General Education comprises all children from six to sixteen years of age and consist of three cycles: (1) Primary Education, four years, including children between six and ten years of age, respectively, the 1st – 4th grades; (2) Gymnasium, four years, from ten to fourteen years of age, comprising the 5th – 8th grades; and (3) the first level of the Lyceum, two years with teenagers between fourteen and sixteen years, including the 9th and 10th high school grades. The limits of compulsory education level were modified again before 1985, through inclusion for generalization of the second high school level, respectively, the 11th – 12th/13th grades, with students age 16 to 18 or 19 years of age.
- Secondary Education (High School) consists of two levels: (1) Junior, the 9th and 10th grades, part of the ten-grade compulsory education in the first phase; and (2) Senior, the 11th and 12th/13th grades, which become part of the compulsory education program during the last decade of the communist era. There are two individualized types of high schools: one, in which students are instructed in general culture, with sciences and the humanities, and the second type, several specialized high schools. Theoretical high

schools comprise a four-year period for day classes and a final fifth year of evening classes or extra-mural study. Specialized high schools, created in 1966, emphasized learning on industrial, health, agricultural, forestry, pedagogical, and several other skills varied from four to five years of study.

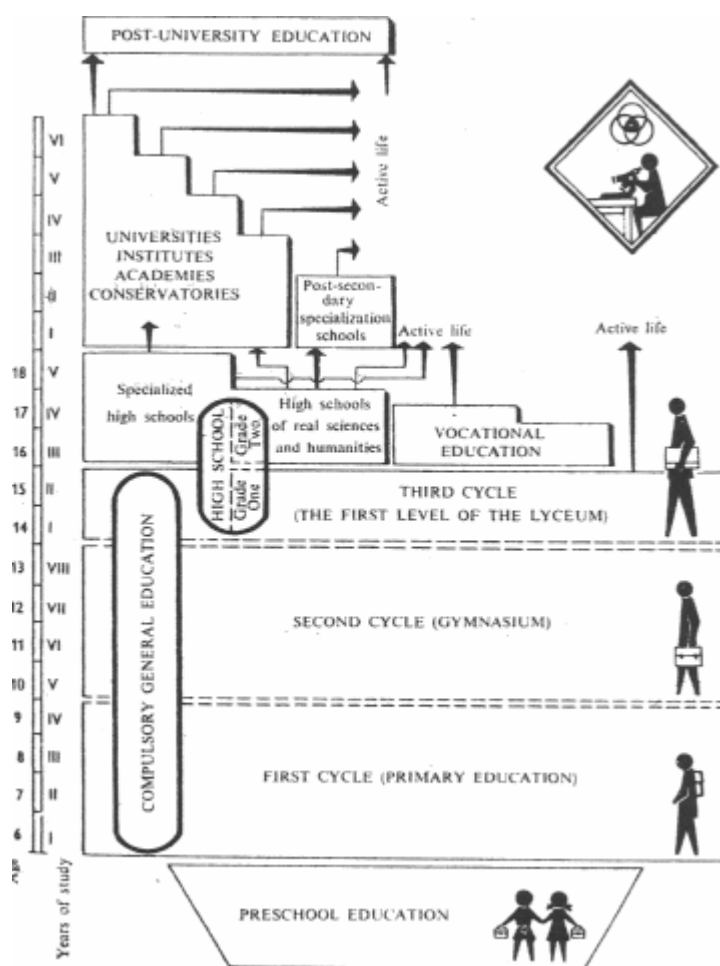


Figure 2.1

EDUCATION STRUCTURE IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA

Source: Ministry of Education (1973): Education in the Socialist Republic of Romania

In addition, educational structure encompasses non compulsory levels such as:

- Vocational Education is provided through vocational schools with either two or three years of study for general education being eight-grade graduates or one to two years of study for tenth grade compulsory school graduates. Often, teenagers have chosen to be qualified through on the job training, taking between one and three years training course.
- Post Secondary Education comprises some specialized schools with either one or two years of study.
- Higher Education is developed in universities, institutes, academies, and conservatories with each lasting for a period of three to six years.
- Post-University Education is organized in higher education establishments and institutes for professional training that last one to twelve months of specialization. A higher level of this type of education is the doctorate.

Many other objectives were proposed during the communist years, some of them sounding very progressive as follows: (1) democratization of education through participation of students in the school management; (2) training of youth for active life and productive work (qualification of labor); (3) integration of higher education with research and production; and (4) the multilateral development of the human personality. Although they looked very generous, these objectives were strong theoretically only. Meanings and practical applications of these objectives were very disputable or, even worse, when their application was put into practice there was a flagrant contradiction with their meanings. This was especially true from 1975-1980 when some democratic ideas pervaded in the Romanian education system. Students had their representatives in the management councils, but, in practice, their voice had very little power. The freedom

of expression, even for teachers, researchers, or professors had been blocked or censored by a totalitarian and dictatorial regime. As Sandi (1992, p. 84) noted, the mentioned communist educational objectives “were in fact supposed to lead to the annihilation of individuality and competition, to uniformity and the cultivation of mediocrity.”

Ideological considerations, political control, excessive centralization, bureaucratization, aberrant laws, absence of information, alternative structures, and a private sector in education are the main problems of the communist administration in education, showing the existence of a very rigid management. Due to the constant decrease in educational funding, i.e., 3.3 % of GNP / 1980 and 2.2 % of GNP / 1987, Romanian students were compelled to learn in large classes numbering 40 or more students, with teachers teaching double or triple shifts. Many schools in the rural zones lacked basic equipment, and the ratio of students to teachers was constantly increased, from 22 / 1 in 1975 to 43 / 1 in 1987 (Sandi, 1992, p. 85).

In addition, Romanian education system faced many other characteristic problems before 1989: e.g., the curricula were overloaded, the emphasis on humanistic subjects was reduced, and replaced by the technical subjects, in accordance with the government's obsession of “the socialist industrialization.” Textbooks were in most cases written in a difficult and unattractive language and the alternative textbooks did not exist. Educational methods were, for the most part, traditional, teacher oriented with very little availability of modern facilities. The evaluations were often times subjective and formal due to the overcrowded classes. It is very important to remark on the unrealistic extension of compulsory education up to 12 years, especially, in a completely unbalanced

and underdeveloped school system, which leads to the severe disparities between rural and urban areas (Table 2.1).

The effect of the anti-intellectualism inherent in communism, which grew worse during the Ceausescu dictatorship, resulted in a constant decrease in the number of students in universities. Entrance examinations were often based on inappropriate criteria, favoring the working class in a flagrant disadvantage for the intellectual families' children, despite the claims of the communist regime which was supposed to ensure equal educational rights.

According to Sandi (1992), many valuable ideas or scientific titles were discredited or ignored by the Romanian communist regime. For instance, “the multilateral development of young generation” through education has become a stereotype used in the official speeches and “the integration of education with research and production” was only formally endorsed without leading to the acquisition of even basic skills, in the majority of cases. The goal of “lowering the repetition rate” has been distorted through the inclusion of the level of repetition as an indicator in evaluating a teacher's performance. In addition, the doctoral degree only had a symbolic value, without paid compensation before 1990.

Finally, it will be interesting to specify the compulsory “voluntary work” in rural areas, in which both rural and urban students accompanied by teachers or professors were forced to work, interrupting the school / university courses some weeks during the fall agriculture campaign, which led to the devaluation and rejection of practical work. In this confuse and aberrant social and political atmosphere, in Romanian schools have installed an automatism in problem solving called by Cerych (1995) an “inertia of

Table 2.1
MAIN FEATURES OF THE CONTENT OF ROMANIAN EDUCATION
UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIME
1944 – 1989

C O N T E N T	E D U C A T I O N A L
	C H A R A C T E R I S T I C S
POLITICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marxist- Leninist doctrine - Political control; Dictatorial regime - Isolation of the international community - Absence of information and freedom of expression - Ideological consideration (favoring working class) - Denial human rights
LEGISLATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aberrant laws: - unrealistic extension of compulsory education in a completely unbalanced development <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- evaluation teacher performance based on the level of repetition - Opportunities: - accessible for all people of school age <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- free of charge at all levels <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- ensuring a certain equality and continuity
STRUCTURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polytechnic education (reduced the need for humanistic subjects) - Overloaded curricula, textbooks, and teachers' schedule - Traditional teaching methods (teacher-centered) with little use of modern facilities (in rural schools) - Difficult to acquire accurate student evaluation (overcrowded classes) - Authoritarian, encyclopedic, and uniformity - Absence of alternative structure and private sector of education - Certain criteria in some higher education fields such as mathematics, medicine, architecture, and sports - Fluency in at least two foreign languages - Preservation of some pre-war educational values
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-intellectualism: - social origin criteria for matriculation on universities; annihilation of individuality and competition; - Cultivation of mediocrity; confused and aberrant social atmosphere (compulsory “voluntary work”) - Well qualified people; assured jobs
MANAGERIAL / FINANCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excessive centralization; bureaucratization; very rigid regulations - Governmental budget only

Source: Adapted from Anweiler (1992); Cerych (1995); Mitter (1992); and Sandi (1992)

acquiring attitude and behavior patterns.” This system was deeply rooted in practice, acting only according to detailed instructions “from above” (e.g., following centrally prescribed curricula), or using outdated teaching methods and contents (e.g., authoritarian and encyclopedic).

Despite all these difficulties of the former Romanian educational system, there are several positive aspects as well. First, education was accessible to all children of school age and absolutely free at all levels. At the same time, due to the dedication of thousand of teachers and traditional inertia of education, some values that existed before the War were preserved. Equality important, a certain equality and continuity was ensured. Although higher education had also suffered from a dictatorial regime with very strong political control and ideology interference, Romanian society has preserved certain achievements which were been reached in some fields (mathematics, medicine, architecture, and sports) in Romanian higher education institutions.

Communist Educational Reforms

General Considerations

During the first years after the Second World War the Soviet armed forces were a real presence in the Romanian territory and the communist influence within educational system became very pronounced. The literature concerning the communist reforms in education provided a picture of the system at all education levels between 1948 and 1989. According to Braham (1972), since official communist acquisition of power at the end of 1947, three major educational reforms have reflected a progressive nationalistic educational trend. First, in 1948, aligned Romania’s Western educational system with that of the Soviet Union; the second, in 1955 reform, called for reorganization of the

schools along polytechnic lines; and the third reform, in the late 1960's, was designed to further Romania's long-range plans for industrialization and technical development and fostered change in general education, higher education, teacher education, and the vocational system. In addition, at the end of the 1970s, a new educational reform was developed by the communist authorities in order to establish new regulations and to create some educational bodies at the national level (Sadlak, 1991).

Following the end of World War II, Romania had to cope with many problems. One of them was a very high level of illiteracy (26.6 %), translating to around four million illiterates in a population of approximately 15 million inhabitants. As a result, the main objectives of the communist state program were "liquidation of illiteracy, effective generalization of compulsory education, free higher education, and reorganization of the structure and contents of learning" (Ministry of Education, 1973)

The 1948 Law of the Educational Reform

Educational reform for the early communist era was adopted on August 3rd, 1948, and called The Law of the Educational Reform. It stated that "education must be secular, conducted only by the state institutions, and based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism" (Sadlak, 1991, p. 204). The system has been conceived to be uniform, and centralized, in which the confessional and private schools were nationalized, and the church and religion were excluded from the field of education. This meant the liquidation of the old, traditional system of education in favor of the Soviet educational pattern. Reforms through this could be expressed through a closer political supervision of students, teachers, professors, and researchers in order to assure their fidelity to the

communist ideology taking into consideration the “needs” of the national economy and new social order.

Although the reform paved the road for the foundation for many establishments in higher education, universities lost most of academic freedom and autonomy which had been granted to them by the 1932 and 1938 education laws. Unlike in other Eastern European countries, in Romania, the fees for higher education, which represented over 50 % of the monthly average income, still were maintained until the beginning of the academic year of 1961-1962 (Sadlak, 1991).

As has been emphasized by Bodor (1992), during the consolidation of the communist regime, in Transylvania, “the problem of national minorities had been overshadowed” and the government began gradually to eliminate the previous concessions. For the Hungarians and Germans, for instance, the loss of denominational schools was accompanied by the loss of their school’s properties with multiple negative repercussions. Late in the 1940s and early 1950s the Hungarian national minority was allowed to have its own educational institutions with tuition in Hungarian, but after the Hungarian insurrection of 1956, the situation of Hungarian higher education in Romania dramatically deteriorated. The new educational policy regarding higher education for national minorities was applied particularly to the Janos Bolyai University of Cluj and two other higher education institutions in Tirgu Mures (Sadlak, 1991). Thus, in July 1959, as a result of the merging of the Hungarian Janos Bolyai University with Romanian Victor Babes University, the Babes – Bolyai University of Cluj was created and Romanian gradually became the main teaching language. Some exceptions for

using the Hungarian language during entrance examinations were preserved for a time but, later during the 1970s, they were practically eliminated.

In order to replace the pre-war intellectual strata, “liberal- bourgeois”, some “original” measures were taken as follows: dismissing “politically unreliable” academics from their positions, imprisoning tens of academics for political reasons, rejecting the validity of the doctorates, forcing many eminent students to drop their studies, and applying criteria of origin and political record for admission in universities and for academic appointments. As Sadlak (1991, p. 208) noted, quoting a Romanian “Pedagogy Magazine” (*Revista de Pedagogie*, No.6, 1957), “in 1957 the Romanian Workers’ Party and the government set as a long-term objective that at least 40 percent of all students should come from working-class families and 30-35 percent from farmers’ families.” At the same time, the Law of 1948 prohibited as well any student organizations except the “Union of Students’ Associations” through which the communist party watched over the political reliability of students. Nevertheless, many Romanian academics, teachers, and even students acclaimed the new system either by their conviction or, for the majority, because of communist terror.

Fortunately, by the Reform of 1948, education which acquired an unitary structure, became accessible to all children. Consequently, the number of students in both pre-university and university levels started to increase. This increase was partly made possible by the reorganization of the secondary educational system through which all secondary-school graduates were entitled to admission to higher education. According to the Ministry of Education (1973), the length of the period of compulsory education was extended from four to seven years. The system of education comprised : a) preschool

institutions for children between 3 and 7 years old; b) elementary schools with two levels: first level included the 1st – 4th grades (7 to 11 year olds) , second level included the 5th – 7th grades (11 to 14 year olds); c) secondary schools with the 8th – 10th grades, and d) higher learning institutes.

The period of learning was modified several times after 1948: first, being reduced to ten years; then, in 1956, it became eleven years; and, since 1961, it has been of twelve years of schooling. In order for the new character of education to be enhanced, some measures were applied such as organization of both gymnasium and high school evening classes, and the correspondence courses, and introduction of the part-time studies into Romanian's higher education. This became a dominant form of part-time studies in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, in order to increase the supply of graduates of working-class origin, there were created the so-called “worker's faculties” at several universities, which provided full-time and evening courses, offering a diploma equivalent to the Bachelor's Degree. Fortunately, at the end of the 1950s, the Romanian authorities modified their previous decisions, recruiting students with “proper” class origin, and new regulations decreed competitive academic examinations as requirements for admission.

The 1955 Educational Law

As has been mentioned previously, educational development after 1955 was done in the light of technological orientation, thus bringing about a period of a quantitative expansion. The network of both secondary and post-secondary schools was developed while some new higher education institutions were opened along with several types of specialized high schools. Consequently, in the 1960s and 1970s, the number of students,

academic staff, educational institutions (engineering and pedagogical studies), and the ratio of students to teachers increased and the material conditions for students were also improved.

The Law and Educational Reform of 1968

The communist authorities started to criticize the Law of 1948, with its “borrowed solutions” from the East and, gradually, created a little distance between Romania and the Soviet Union. As a result, a new reform of education and the development of scientific research were declared as the major objectives of the party and state. Replacing the Law of 1948 and the subsequent educational provisions, the new Educational Law, promulgated on May 13th, 1968, stressed the role of science as a “critical factor of modern progress” and emphasized higher education as a “necessary step in carrying out the scientific and technological revolution in Romania” (Sadlak, 1991, p. 213).

Ceausescu’s critical attitude toward the policies of the Soviet Union brought him some prestige in the West. At the same time, in the country, the Romanian intellectuals gave him their support either as a product of prudence or, many of them, really had faith in his promises. Unfortunately, the revival of nationalism, or so-called “socialist patriotism”, has proliferated and affected the Romanian’s image throughout Europe.

According to the Romanian Ministry of Education (1973), the Law of 1968 had several important provisions as follows: the extension of compulsory schooling from eight to ten years; extension and diversification of high school education; change in the ratio of general secondary schools and specialized schools in favor of the later; steady modernization of curricula, textbooks, academic courses, and teaching methods.

Fortunately, the law eliminated familial origin as a criterion for admission, especially into

a higher education program, thus being replaced with a competitive written and oral examinations. In addition, through this law, the universities partially benefited by decentralization of control over the universities and the strengthening of university autonomy. Despite the restoration of university autonomy and of education, in general, the communist control over the educational process, under different forms and degrees, still persisted for many years.

The 1978 Educational Law

As has been emphasized by Sadlak (1991), the final communist Education Law was enacted in December 1978. Through this law some educational bodies and new regulations were developed. Consequently, at the national level, four educational bodies were developed as follows: the National Council for Science and Technology, the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, the Congress on Education and Instruction, and the Supreme Council for Education and Instruction. At the same time, new regulations were established for both high school and higher education such as extension and diversification of the high schools, maintaining of the political criteria for the academic appointments and promotions, and requirements to undertake “productive activities” by all higher education institutions while causing decline in some fields of study such as law, humanities (including teacher training), natural sciences, and mathematics in favor of engineering and architecture.

The intrusion of the communist party into Romanian education process and its capacity to do lasting damage to the personal life of any individual who did not submit to it reached the highest levels during the 1980s. School and academic life visibly deteriorated under Ceausescu’s dictatorship. But the reforms in the eighties within some

Eastern European countries were a signal for the beginning of a departure from the rigid and indoctrinated position of the communist regime. These reforms confirmed the first steps toward decentralization (Hungary, Poland) even though the countries from the former Soviet Union, for example, still emphasized the need for ideological education and the reinforcement of control by the communist party. According to Mitter (1992), steps toward more flexibility and openness to cooperation with Western educationists could be observed even among the hardliners Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, but Romania continued to remain in its state of “autonomous torpor” until the democratic revolution in 1989.

Summary

Before 1989 Western educationists wrote very little about Romanian education systems, but after the 1989 revolution many valuable articles began to be published analyzing the educational characteristics of the communist era. These articles reflect the complexity of change in Romanian education system after 45 years of the Soviet model’s domination.

The educational legislation enacted during this period of time brought some significant improvements in Romanian education, but through each law’s provisions it can be observed the communist party’s economical and political commend rather than the real population’s interest in education. According to my experience, the very high competition for students’ matriculation at some university departments such as law, medicine, economics, and foreign languages, on the one hand, and the very low number of candidates for entrance examination into some technical departments, on the other

hand, confirm an acute discordance between people's interests and political commend. A comparative analysis of the communist educational laws is suggested on Table 2.2.

Unfortunately, Western readers did not always correctly understand the degree of deterioration of the former communist countries' educational systems in the context of their common experiences. For instance, correlating education outputs (well qualified people and fluency of at least two foreign languages) with some factors as under-funding, over centralization, bureaucracy, uniformity, or lack of information, it is confusing for many readers how an "inferior" system can produce good results.

But, it is general known in Romania, and confirmed through my years of experience as a geography teacher, that despite the communist constraints, many people developed a strong motivation to attend schools, accumulate information, if even done in "illegal" ways, and to preserve certain values which were attached to education. Therefore, Romanians have seen education as a panacea against the totalitarian and dictatorial communist regime and their interest. This correlated with teachers' devotion, was an excellent attitude against the limitations played by the communists. Consequently, Romania, like several Eastern European countries, has been cited in international education assessments as having good quality education at the primary and secondary levels as well as in certain disciplines in higher education.

Table 2.2
COMMUNIST EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN ROMANIA
1948 – 1978

1948	1955	1968	1978
<u>Education Features:</u> Aligned Romania's Western-oriented educational system to the Soviet Union - Marxism-Leninism principles, dictatorial - uniform, centralized - political control - criteria of origin - anti-intellectualism - secular : incompatibility of church and religion with education	<u>Education Features:</u> Called for reorganization of schools along polytechnic lines - quantitative expansion - technological orientation	<u>Education Features:</u> Designed to further long-range plans for industrialization and technical development and fostered changes at all education levels - persistent political control - revival of nationalism - distance toward the Soviet Union - signals of autonomy & decentralization	<u>Education Features:</u> Developed some national education bodies and new regulations -strong political intrusion in school and personal life - deterioration of school and academic life - political criteria for academic appointments and promotions - lasting damage into personal life - total country isolation
<u>Law's Objectives:</u> - liquidation of illiteracy - generalization of compulsory education from 4 to 7 years - accessible to all - free higher education - reorganization of the structure and contents of learning - assimilation of national minorities in education - nationalization of the confessional and private schools - liquidation of the traditional education system - replacing the pre-war intellectual strata - 10 th grade: the length of pre-university education	<u>Law's Objectives:</u> - reorganization of secondary, post-secondary, and higher education - opening new educational institutions - developing several types of specialized high schools - increasing the length of education from 10 to 11 years - increasing the number and ratio of students / teacher - preoccupations for improvement of material conditions	<u>Law's Objectives:</u> - stressing the role of science and higher education - development of scientific research - extension of compulsory education from 8 to 10 years - increasing the length of schooling from 11 to 12 years - extension and diversification of high school education - changed the ratio between general and specialized secondary schools - modernization of the education content and teaching methods - replacing familial origin with competitive exams	<u>Law's Objectives:</u> - openings of four educational bodies (National Council for Science & Technology; the Academy of Social and Political Sciences; the Congress on Education and Instruction; and the Supreme Council for Education and Instruction) - further extension and diversification of high school education - productive activities in higher education - striking decline in humanities, law, natural sciences, mathematics in favor of technical fields

Source: Adapted from Sadlak (1991); Bodor (1991); Mitter (1992); and Romanian Ministry of Education (1993)

CHAPTER 3

THE DEMOCRATIC REFORM OF EDUCATION

The economic and political disintegration of the former communist countries represents a crucial post-war event and the starting point of a new process of reform in education in these countries. As has been emphasized by Birzea (1996), in December 1989, when the Ceausescu communist regime fell, most people believed that transition to democracy, and, consequently, a reform of education would be an easier and more rapid process. Despite the fact that the Romanian students, the main actors of the event of December 1989, wanted immediately significant reforms, especially, in the field of education, but this could not happen. The rigidity of the old regime, the absence of a real political culture among the population, the struggle of the political power, and the less inspired governing solutions within a disastrous inherited economy were the major barriers in the educational reform process.

As it is well known, an educational reform is an inevitable process after a change of political power. Under these conditions, for Romania, it was very important to decide the major directions for a new reform. According to Anweiler (1992), as a characteristic of all Eastern European countries' orientation, the search for a new system of education has taken two main directions: the first is directed towards the past, to their educational history, and the other looks towards experience abroad. Therefore, in Romania, there was a pronounced tendency to look back positively to the system that existed before the communist power and to enforce change. But, in order for the new educational

provisions to correspond to the new modern needs in a democratic society the educational reformists and policy-makers had to start looking abroad to adopt some solutions which would fit the new Romanian realities. At the same time, as in many Eastern European countries, it must be taken into consideration the re-emergence of long standing ethnic questions in education (in Transylvania, especially) and the re-acceptance of the educational role of religion (forbidden in school for over 45 years by the communist authorities).

Many Romanian or European researchers, after 1989, focused their papers on the characteristics of the Romanian educational reform, either as a case study or in the Eastern European context. In her book, for instance, Georgescu (1997), presents a systematic and coherent exposition of the Romanian educational system and outlines the essential problems the system faces. Birzea (1993) describes current reform efforts in Romania and identifies eleven types of secondary schools determined by vocational goals. At the same time, he discusses eight objectives for innovation and research, including curriculum reform, the relationship between general and vocational education, student assessment, and decentralization of decision making.

An interesting comparison between Romania K-12 schools and higher education is done by Teodorescu and Stoicescu (1998). They seek to understand why reform in the K-12 educational system has failed while higher education reform has been more rapid and effective. Several failures of K-12 school reform are identified and the authors call for a reevaluation of paradigms in educational administration, for a new school culture, for rebuilding of the relationships between administrators and teachers, and for re-definition of the concept of performance in education.

Curriculum reform is one of the most important elements of the educational reform in Romania. Crisan (1992) defines curriculum reform in Romania as “the elaboration and progressive settings up of a new educational paradigm unaltered by the outlooks and consequences of the Communist era.” Viewing educational reform as primarily curricular reform, Crisan (1992) offers a brief but comprehensive image of present and future problems Romania is facing in the field of curriculum development during the transition period and provides elements concerning conceptual tendencies and the priorities for a future strategy of curriculum development as part of the larger pedagogical reform.

Literacy development efforts, including geographic literacy, have faced many challenges in Romania. An interesting review of the history of literacy training in Romania is made by Anghel (1994), who has classified the period after 1890 into three parts: pre-totalitarian (1890-1945), totalitarian (1945-1989), and post-totalitarian (1989-present). Special attention is accorded to rural literacy training which, although it has registered important strides, still faces more difficulties in comparison with urban literacy.

The development of higher education and the process of educational reform in Romania are detailed and reviewed by Sadlak (1990, 1991). This exploration shows how the institution of higher education has been both a “hot-bed” for political change and a tool used by those in power for purposes other than society’s educational, professional, cultural, and scholarly development (Sadlak, 1990).

According to the World Bank and United Nation’s documents (2001), Romania almost always allocated to education a precarious level of resources, the main cause

being its disastrous economic situation. The World Bank has proposed a five-year education reform program to be implemented by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research which would seek to raise the quality of basic and secondary education, restructure vocational education, and improve educational finance and management. Although educational funding is precarious, the real factors blocking the reform, in Birzea's (1993; 1995) opinion, are not financial or political, but mainly related to human resources. As a result, education must become a key factor of social change, especially since the communist mentalities cannot disappear as suddenly as they were considered.

In order to understand the complexity of the new educational reform and its implications in Romanian schools, it is planned to be primarily analyzed within the development and implementation of the reform along the four major stages which took place in the context of transitional process. The focus will be directed to the main educational characteristics with regard to the objectives of education and education structure; the legal framework and educational policies; the educational resources and international cooperation; secondary school education: the curriculum reform and secondary teachers; and the new regulations for minorities' education. This is a hot topic for Romania and the entire Eastern European region.

Stages of Educational Reform in the Context of the Process of Transition

All observations regarding the period after the 1989 revolution provide evidence of diverse approaches to innovation and reform within the educational system of Romania. According to Mitter (1992), all the innovative trends are focused on removal of all indoctrinating pressure from education closing down several universities and institutes that were devoted to Marxist-Leninist ideology, eliminating "civics," and "purifying"

curricula and syllabuses. Then, in the developing reform process, there were many ardent debates which have dealt with: the length of compulsory schooling; the lower level of high school education; the final school examinations; the reduction of the “overload” of syllabuses; the revision of instructional methods; teaching in the mother tongues of national minorities; foreign languages teaching; education funding; private education; the educational role of religion and so on.

An analysis of the major steps into the educational reform process in Romania, suggests four distinct reform stages (Birzea, 1996; Butuca et al, 2001): (1) De-Structuring (1990), (2) Stabilization (1991-1992), (3) Restructuring (1993-1995), and (4) Comprehensive Educational Reform (1996 onwards), in which were applied the above cited reform strategies as follows: Corrective Reforms, Modernization Reforms, Structural Reforms, and Systemic Reforms (Table 3.1). Once the reform options were formulated, several Counter-Reform reactions appeared (after 1993) from different political parties or pressure groups such as the former political class, ethnic parties, students’ legal battles, and even the main education trade unions.

1. De-Structuring (1990)

The first stage, De-Structuring, occurred right in the middle of the 1990 school year. This was manifested through the denial of the old educational system with a major effect on educational practice. This means that the main instruments of communist education (e.g., Marxist ideology, single party control, over-centralization, and excessive bureaucracy) were eliminated. In May 1990, through a government decision regarding the organization of the new school year, a legislative confirmation of changes had already taken place. The changes stipulated in 1990 covered a large area of problems, all having

Table 3.1

STAGES AND STRATEGIES OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN ROMANIA

1990 onwards

STRATEGY	Stage 1: DE-STRUCTURING 1990	Stage 2: STABILIZATION 1991-1992	Stage 3: RESTRUCTURING 1993-1995	Stage 4: COMPREHENSIVE EDUC. REFORM 1996 onwards
CORRECTIVE REFORMS	- time of denying the old education system - immediate correction of the major characteristics of communist education			
MODERNIZATION REFORMS		- resetting and reconstruction (changing the content and methods; synchronization with the West)		
STRUCTURAL REFORMS			- content, legal, and managerial framework/Education, Accreditation, and Foreign Co-Financing Laws	
SYSTEMIC REFORMS				- attempts to a global reform: structures, decision making, type of institution, and relationship

Source: Adapted from Birzea, 1996, Education Reform and Power Struggles in Romania. European Journal of Education Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 97-107.

the organization of the new school year, a legislative confirmation of changes had already taken place. The changes stipulated in 1990 covered a large area of problems, all having the same goal: shifting from quantity to quality of education. In order to be reached the compulsory education was brought down to 8th grade, the size of classes was established to be a maximum of 36 students, and the didactical norm not more than 18 class hours per week. In rural zones all teaching loads were established at 16 hours per week, the same teaching load being for all teachers in the country with over 25 years experience.

The second shift was from the polytechnic education to the universal education in the humanistic and social sciences. Of course, the new plan continued to be strong in hard sciences and to allocate special time (2-4 hours/week) for elective training. Before 1989 general (academic) secondary schools accounted for only 5 % of secondary education, but between 1990 and 1992, these traditional institutions, recognized as having an excellent inter-war record, increased to 40 %. At the same time, secondary education was diversified through adding new fields and subjects. The final high school examination, the baccalaureate exam, was to remain the only exam for the high school level due to the cancellation of the exam after 10th grade (the first high school level examination).

After the revolution ethnic problems re-appeared and even intensified. As a result, the new regulations guaranteed education with tuition in the mother tongues of the Romanian national minorities (Figure 3.1). Due to measures opening up in educational policy in the 1990-1991 school year the number of the re-opened secondary school units and/or sections with tuition in Hungarian, German, and other minorities' languages

started to raise. At the same time, in 1990 the private and theological schools with tuition in Hungarian, which were closed after 1945, were re-opened.

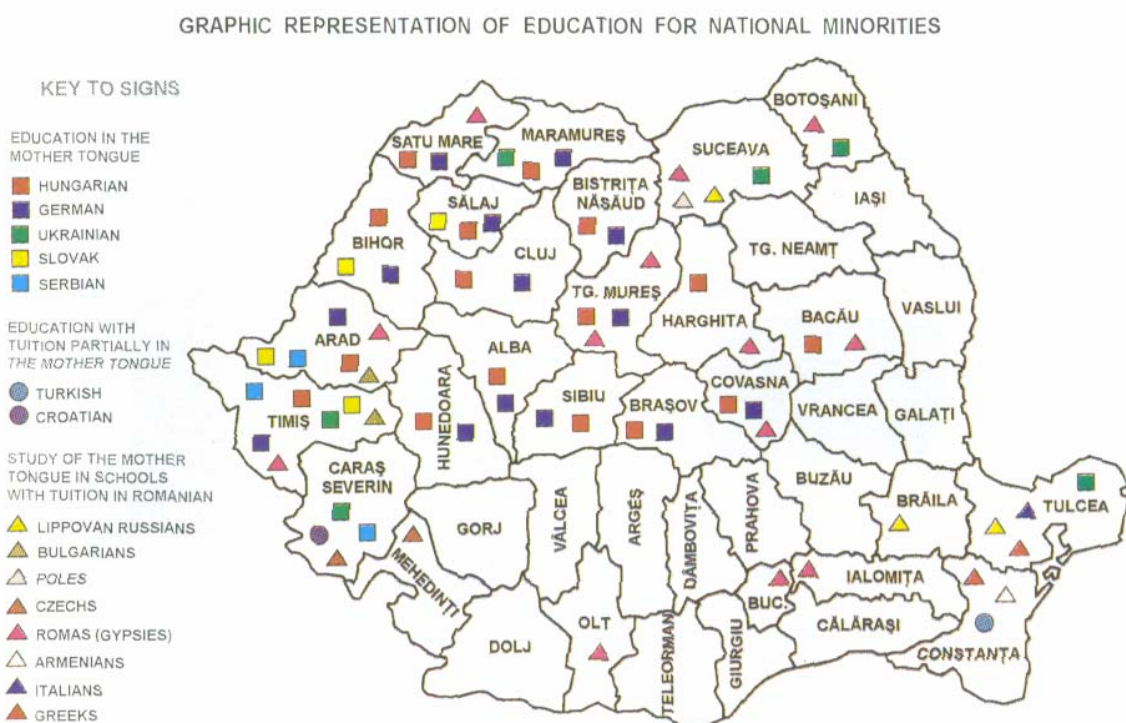


Figure 3.1

Source: The Ethos of Education for National Minorities in Romania, 2000,
Ministry of National Education, Bucharest

Romanian education has a tradition in studying foreign languages (French, German, then Russian, English, Spanish, Italian, Latin), but after 1990, this program was intensified. The first modern foreign language is officially introduced in the 2nd grade, but, in many cases, especially at some parents' request and with their financial support, a

foreign language, English especially, was gradually, unofficially, introduced in the kindergarten. The second foreign language is added in the fifth grade and there are special secondary schools in which a third foreign language is taught. Latin, as a classic language, is taught in both levels, gymnasium and high school, as a rule, in the 8th and 9th grades.

Although during the communist era some post-secondary schools were organized especially schools with technical specializations, after 1990, many other specializations were opened up providing two or three years of training. Last, but not least, through this governmental decision the university was ensured autonomy.

2. Stabilization (1991-1992)

The second stage, Stabilization, is considered the period of 1991-1992, when a legal framework for re-establishing the education system was defined. The most important step in implementing reform was the promulgation of the new Constitution of Romania in December 1991. Through Article 32 several major provisions were sanctioned. These provisions were in the form of language of instruction, free access, better quality, equality of opportunity, private education conditions and alternative schools, diversification of education supply, university autonomy, and freedom for religious education (Butuca et al, 2001; Birzea, 1996). Of course, Romanian education remained accessible for all. Also, the Constitution recognizes and guarantees the educational rights for national minorities. Thus Article 6 of this law specifies that “The State recognizes and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and

religious identity” (Ministry of Public Information, Ministry of Education and Research, 2001, p.77).

Because the 1990 changes were so profound, breaking down the communist stability after the 1978 education reform, the 1991-1992 educational policies had only to “strengthen earlier decisions and set the educational system on a firm foundation” (Birzea, 1996, p. 101). Thus, the government Decision 461/1991, did not change the organization of the educational system, but it brought a few changes such as the introduction of several alternative educational models (e.g., Waldorf, Montessori, Freinet, Petersen); the diversification of secondary education; the restoration the Ministry of Education’s responsibility for special education; the designation of higher education structure (college, university, and graduate/post-graduate levels), etc.

In 1992, the Ministry of Education submitted to the public debate the first draft of the Education Bill which, through those over 2,000 amendments, proved not only the widespread interest but also the significance of a new educational law, ardently required by the Romanian democracy.

3. Restructuring (1993-1995)

The third stage, Restructuring, expanded in the 1993-1995 period. Since 1993, Romania, already a member of the Council of Europe, had a greater opportunity to move closer to the European Union structures concerning the improvement of new quality standards in education. In order to reach this desideratum, Romania began a new educational program in which, according to Birzea (1996), had to pursue four major objectives: formulating a new education policy; mobilizing foreign co-financing

educational reform; changing the legal framework; and restructuring the educational system.

The basic documents for a coherent educational policy were adopted in early 1993, from which, the most important are “The White Paper on Education in Romania” and “Higher Education Reform in Romania.” These policies were prepared by a research team from the Institute of Education Sciences and by the Consultative Group for Higher Education and Research. According to these documents, Romanian education must adjust its objectives in order to answer to any economic and social changes. The main directions and priorities of the educational reform are as follows: decentralization, reorganizing teacher training, curricular reform and the European compatibility of the national curriculum, alternative textbooks for the pre-university educational levels, reforming vocational education, reforming higher education and university scientific research, and international cooperation (www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm).

A priority of this stage was to attract several foreign partners for co-financing the program, with the understanding that the Romanian educational reform could not be sustained only with domestic funding. The economic and political restructuring process have the financial support of the World Bank and UE-PHARE. Romanian specialists participate in other different programs as well. One of them is TEMPUS, developed within the framework of the European Community’s PHARE program (Wilson, 1993; Birzea, 1996; Novak et al, 1998).

According to Novak et al (1998), in 1994 World Bank started to co-finance the educational reform program within the pre-university level with 50 million dollars. This program established the following objectives: new curriculum development, teacher

training, alternative textbooks for all subjects and grades, assessment and examination system reform, educational management reform, school infrastructure, professional career counseling, and defining new occupational standards through a new tripartite system of cooperation between government, employers, and trade unions. In addition, the pre-university education development is supported financially by UE-PHARE program, specifically the UE-PHARE VET RO 9405 program for vocational and technical education, with a budget of 25 million dollars (www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm, p.7). At the same time, World Bank, together with the Romanian Government and UE-PHARE, financially supports Romanian higher education, with funds totaling around 70 million dollars. The main objectives are the preparation of a highly qualified work force in accordance with the market economy evolution, graduate education, and a university scientific research framework (www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm, p.10).

Changing the legal framework was particularly important for the 1993-1995 period of Restructuring through the enactment of two laws: first, the Law for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (Law # 88 / 1993) and second, the Law of Education (Law # 84/1995). The Law of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (1993) was imposed by an unusual eruption of new institutions, when between January and July 1990, Romania registered a European record with 75 private universities (Birzea, 1996). Due to the fact that many of these new private institutions were operating with very few resources, this law set minimum conditions in order to be accepted as part of the educational system.

The 1995 Law of Education, as an organic law, is the first post-communist educational law in Romania which, according to Article 1, “regulates the organization

and functioning of the national system of education” (www.edu.ro/leginv.htm, p.1).

According to the law, all Romanian citizens have the right to study at all levels and educational forms regardless of sex, race, nationality, political, cultural, religious affiliations or social and material conditions. All educational levels are carried on in the Romanian language, as an official state language, but, in accordance with the law, Articles 118 and 119, states people belonging to the national minorities have the right to study in their mother tongues at all levels of educational organization if they request groups, classes, sections, and even schools with tuition in their native language (The Law of Education, 1995, Chapter 12, in <http://www.edu.ro>).

Also, in Romania, education constitutes national priority and the public education is free of charge. The financing of public education is realized with the state budget guaranteeing a minimum of 4 % of Gross Domestic Product (www.edu.ro/leginv.htm, p. 26). As the highest educational forum, the Ministry of Education “projects, grounds, and applies the global strategy of education, establishes the objectives of the entire educational system, as well as the educational objectives for the educational levels and profiles” (www.edu.ro/leginv.htm, Art. 2, p. 2). Therefore, the Ministry of Education elaborates the educational framework-plans, curriculum, syllabuses, and textbooks for the pre-university education. Unlike the pre-university education level, within higher education institutions, the framework-plans and curriculum are established in accordance with the university autonomy and national standards.

In this perspective, the Education Act stipulates some important provisions that delineate the new education from the communist one, promoting the democratic education principles and guaranteeing the right for a differentiated education. The 1995-

1996 school year was a challenging year since it was the first school year in which the new Educational Law's provisions were in effect. In order to assure the functionality of the educational system within the complex process of restructuring, the Ministry of Education elaborated in a short period of time an impressive number of new regulations.

Through the new projects initiated with the World Bank and UE-PHARE finance, all pre-university curricula and textbooks started to be changed. It was proposed that all curricula to be changed by 1997 and all new textbooks by 2000. The procedure chosen by the Ministry of Education was that an expert commission had to select three textbooks for each curriculum subject and then each school was free to choose one from each selection. Although their independence in decision-making is still limited, for the first time, Romanian students had this opportunity to use the alternative textbooks in accordance with the revised curricula.

The state monopoly in the organization of education has been suppressed. Consequently, under this Act's provisions, the national education system comprises both public and private educational institutions. Private education constitutes an alternative to public education and was an important objective in restructuring the Romanian education. The accredited private schools and institutions were included into the national education system and were to be supported partially by the state: e.g., the expenses for payment of teachers' salaries were covered by the Ministry of Education using the state budget (www.edu.ro/leginv.htm, p.17). In addition, the alternative education could be organized either in public or private educational system if they are validated by the Ministry of Education.

Also, for the first time after 45 years of communism, the educational plans for the primary, middle, high school, and vocational education included religion as a school subject, but the religious proselytism, as well as any political activity, are forbidden in educational institutions. Religion is a compulsory subject only within the primary education level, in the middle, high, and vocational schools being an optional/elective course of study.

Although the idea to have all secondary school levels as compulsory education has been (and is still) a great idea, the communist system was unable to develop and support a world-class education system. As a result, the Law of Education in 1995 stipulates, as a first step, moving down the compulsory education level to 8 years of study. Therefore, compulsory attendance for children and teenagers stops at age 16.

In accordance with the Law of Education (1995), the national education system has the following structure:

1. Pre-University Education:

- Pre-School Education (three levels between 3 and 6 / 7 years old);
- Primary Education (1st – 4th grades);
- Secondary Education: – Middle School (5th – 8th grades);
 - Vocational School (2 – 4 years of study);
 - High School (9th – 12th / 13th grades, widely diversified);
- Post-Secondary Education (1 – 3 years);

2. Higher Education:

- University Education: – short length of study (3 years);
 - long length of study (4 - 6 years);

- Post-University Education : – Master’s Degree (1 – 2 years);
– Ph.D. (4 years).

Having an open character, the educational system, under the new structure provisions, permitted students to change their initial options and to move from a profile to another if this is in their interest. The state and other interested factors subsidize the student performance activities, on the national and international levels, and for very good school results, the pupils and students, enrolled in the day classes of public education, can benefit from grants and scholarships. The Ministry of Education could approve classes or school units for gifted education and the students with exceptional school performances could achieve two years of study in one school year. Also, the students could study concomitantly two specializations, if they fulfill all requirements stipulated by law. The law guaranteed the education of students with special needs and the university autonomy.

The law brings several new decisions and opportunities in education, referring to the school graduation examination and alternative options of study. For instance, at the end of the 8th grade year, a compulsory middle school graduation examination was introduced. This exam, called the Capacity exam, was stated by the former Minister of Education as “the first life’s exam” (Marga, 1999). According to the 1995 Law of Education, this exam is a national exam and the first session was established to be held in 1999. The exam comprises four disciplines: Romanian Language, Mathematics, Romanians History, and the Geography of Romania, to which is added the mother tongue, for the national minorities’ students who studied in their native language. The

exam's results determined the next step of the middle school graduates (high school, vocational, or apprentice schools) in accordance with the students' options.

The Baccalaureate exam continues to remain as the high school graduation examination, but diversified in accordance with the high school or class profile and students' options. For this comprehensive exam there were seven established examinations as follows (www.edu.ro/leginv.htm, p. 9):

- Romanian Language and Literature (written and oral);
- Mother Tongue (written and oral) – for students who have studied in one of the national minority languages;
- Mathematics (written). Exception: for the theoretic – humanistic, theology, arts, and sports sections, Mathematics is replaced with a socio – humanistic discipline (written);
- Romanians History (oral);
- A Modern Foreign Language (oral);
- One of these disciplines: Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Romanian Geography (oral);
- One optional discipline (oral) – different than above.

The examination commissions were established by the County School Inspectorates with teachers from other high schools and, as a novelty, the Commissions' Presidents are appointed by the Ministry of Education and must be a Ph. D. Professor in one of the country's universities. Only high school graduates with a baccalaureate diploma can be accepted, after a competitive exam, to study in a university. The law introduced a new provision for the matriculation exam into universities, i. e., the students who obtained

exceptional results, at national and international school Olympiads, artistic and sportive contests, had the right to matriculate to the university without an admission exam. In order to have the right to opt for a didactical profession, the students from arts and sciences departments must take all required courses in Pedagogy, Psychology, Logics, Sociology, and Teaching Methods. As a new opportunity, the required courses for teaching education can be taken within the first three years of a teaching activity. In higher education, the Master's Degree level has been introduced. However, this degree is not a requirement for admission to a Ph. D. program. Both pre-university and public university education are still free of charge, excepting some reasonable taxes for exams / activities in accordance with the law's provisions.

4. Comprehensive Educational Reform (1996 onwards)

The fourth and final stage of the education reform in Romania, which started at the end of 1996, was, at the same time, an acceleration of the already initiated reforms. This comprehensive educational reform, as a systemic reform, aimed "to provide a modern and efficient education service using the available human and material resources" (Butuca et al, 2001). According to Novak et al (1998), the realities from Romania imposed, first, the finalization of the transitional education reform during the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 school years. Then the systemic reform of Romanian education was to continue after the year 2000 to be better connected to the European system.

Against a background of postponing or slowing down the reform process, several urgent factors determined acceleration of change. Such as the need for real performances, a real impact of education toward the country's modernization, the specialists' coupling to the effort of modernization, decrease of school abandonment, the

liquidation of the functional illiteracy, and the decrease of the young specialists' emigration (Marga, 1999). All these have demonstrated that the continuation of the reform process in Romanian education has been not only a necessity but also an urgency.

A comprehensive plan of reform for education was conceived in 1997 and was presented as a consecutive set of six chapters of objectives (Marga, 1999):

- (1) decentralization of the system through consolidation of the institutional autonomy of the educational units and reformation of school and academic management;
- (2) educational contents reform (educational framework-plans, national curriculum, textbooks) and achievement of international compatibility in regard to the national curriculum;
- (3) establishment of a new relationship between educational institutions, at all levels, and between educational institution and the local authorities;
- (4) improvement of the school infrastructure and re-launching of rural education through a foreign loan;
- (5) moving forward through the resumption of the scientific research in universities, changing the character of education (from reproductive learning to problem solving), and connection to the contemporary worldwide electronic communication net;
- (6) advanced forms of international cooperation.

This period was particularly important for some new institutional and legislative reforms such as the Status of Didactical Personnel (1997), the National Council on Curricula, the National Office for Evaluation and Examination, the National Agency for Professional Training (1998), the National Center for Diploma Recognition and Equivalency (1999), and so on. In addition, it can be mentioned a long range of

amendments were proposed by the Ministry of National Education. All were recognized as “major steps” of reform by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and European Union Reports of 1998 and 1999 (www.edu.ro/reformeducation.htm, p. 2). From these, it is important to note the proposals for the nine years of compulsory education and raising of the public education finance to 6 % of GDP. All these were determined because of the multiple changes during the transition process in Romania (www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm, p. 5-6).

During the years of 1998 and 1999 important steps were undertaken toward the implementation of the comprehensive reform of education in Romania that aimed to satisfy the complex needs of the country. These steps would protect the Romanian traditions while also allowing compatibility with the present European standards. Thus, a new curricular structure, a modern organization of scientific research, an improved infrastructure, the existence of European-level information technology, decentralization, institutional autonomy, and advanced forms of international cooperation, as well as other achievements can be considered vital changes of the transitional education reform which allowed, starting with the year 2000, initiation of more advanced reform steps. In order to be finalized the transitional education reform, changing the people’s mentality had to become a necessary or even a compulsory condition.

Counter-Reform (after 1993)

Once the reform options were formulated, several counter-reform reactions appeared, immediately after the launching of the reform draft in January 1993, either from the former political class or from different pressure groups (ethnic parties, students’ legal battles). According to Birzea (1996), the favorite subjects of the counter-reform

press were: the need for stability, national pride, suspicion of foreigners, compromising home-based reform, and discrediting educational research and innovation. The former communists considered the development of 1990-1995 as being an “anarchic evolution” which had led to a drastic decline, or an “involution reform”, causing “social insecurity, violence, and falling standards of living” (Birzea, 1996, p. 105). In addition, the students and the Democratic Union of the Hungarians from Romania (UDMR) have contested the Education Law’s provisions; the former concerning university autonomy and some taxes and the latter, as usual, concerning the ethnic Hungarians’ rights for education.

The Process of Reform in Secondary Education

Overview

Secondary School in the Romanian education system comprises the 5th – 12th/13th grades of the middle and high school to which is added the vocational school. An important characteristic of the lower secondary schools, the 5th – 8th grades, is their link with primary schools, together representing the compulsory phase of the educational system through which all children must pass. The upper secondary schools, the 9th – 12th/13th grades, belong, excepting the 9th grade, to the post-compulsory phase of school attendance for young people who are preparing to continue their studies or to enter the labor market.

As has been emphasized above, one of the decisions in 1990, during the first stage of the Romanian educational reform was moving down to the 8th grade the compulsory education action which was sanctioned by the Law of Education in 1995. By shortening the period from 12 years to 8 years, the Romanian authorities wanted to bring compulsory attendance into line with the number of school years at “Basic” school level

(Kotasek, 1996). Later, the Educational Law was revised and, as a result, the limits of the compulsory education were raised again. Currently, according to an OECD Report (2000), Romania has established in its law that the compulsory school attendance extends to the ninth grade year (four for the primary education and five for gymnasium or middle school) and the age range to which compulsory school attendance applies extends from age six or seven to seventeen.

There is already evidence of a trend to lower the school starting age from seven to six but for the time being, Romanian parents still have the opportunity to decide when their children should enter the school (Vieru, <http://www.expres.ro>, 2003). At the same time, there is a tendency to again raise the compulsory school to 10 years (<http://www.edu.ro>, 2003). This tendency toward extending the compulsory phase has been influenced, on the one hand, by the development of education and, on the other hand, by an attempt to solve the problem of unemployment among young people, thus taking into consideration the economic crisis and the market economy's conditions.

As in a majority of other countries, lower secondary schools in Romania (the 5th – 8th grades) are non-selective, therefore, the schools are known as comprehensive schools. Unlike in primary schools with a traditional elementary curriculum and a single class room teacher (except for foreign languages), within secondary school, teaching is divided into general and specialized education subjects with teachers specializing in particular subjects. Despite the fact that in Romania, as in the majority of Eastern European countries, the population of compulsory school-age is diminishing, the number of comprehensive classes and schools is moderately increasing. This happens as a result of lowering the number of students per class, maximum 36, and reducing the age for starting

school, from 7 to 6 years old, in accordance with the law and the reform's provisions. At the same time, this development is the result of a tendency toward decentralization of the school system and a more permissive policy with regard to establishing new state and private (independent) schools. Although the middle school graduation examination, the Capacity exam, is still in force, there is already the tendency for it to be eliminated (Vieru et al, 2003; <http://www.edu.ro/>, 2003). In this case, the only valid exam for the secondary level will remain the Baccalaureate exam or high school graduation examination.

Unlike the lower secondary level, the upper secondary level, with the 9th – 12th/13th grades, is a selective education. Before 1999, the enrollment for upper secondary school was insured after passing a competitive high school matriculation exam, currently, the students' enrollment in a high school is established in conjunction with the middle school graduation examination results. Consequently, the middle school graduates with the highest grades on the exam will opt to continue studying in high schools, in their restricted number of places, while those students with lower results will have to choose the vocational schools. In this context, strengthening the social equality of the rights in education is one of the main conditions, in the national interest, for expanding both secondary school education levels.

In the Romanian education system there is approximately one quarter of the total population, around 5 million children, students, faculty, and staff (Novak et al, 1998). Almost half of all school students live in the rural areas but, unfortunately, they often do not have the same access to schools and, especially, to the quality of education as their urban colleagues. In Romania, as in many countries, there are several important rural

disparities from which the most important are those regarding the available resources, student performances, and teacher migration. At the same time, even within the rural areas, there are important disparities. Some rural zones being very well developed in comparison with others. Due to the fact that after 1990 teacher migration to town increased, this negatively affected the quality of education in rural school. Thus, through the reform's provisions, the development programs of rural education must be accelerated taking into consideration some objectives as follows: attracting qualified teachers; expanding and equipping rural schools; improving the transportation network, supplying school libraries; and so on.

Curricular Reform

At the end of the transitional educational reform, after 1997, as a continuation of the actions developed in the preceding years, the Romanian Ministry of National Education started to develop a series of comprehensive reform actions from which, a major one, could be considered the curricular reform. There were many arguments and debates in favor of a continuous adjustment of the school curricula to the new school realities after the 1989 revolution and to the new educational requirements imposed by this change. This was a valid action within all Eastern European countries. Due to the fact that “syllabi must keep abreast of the evolution of knowledge”, they are considered “the instruments through which the traditional, universally acknowledged goals of education are attained” (Kallen, 1996). Therefore, the new National Curriculum for the pre-university education could be considered as a “key piece” of the educational reform.

The process of elaboration of the National Curriculum has had three fundamental points of reference: (1) the reference to the present dynamics and necessities, as well as

the long-term finalities of the Romanian education system; (2) the reference to the present tendencies and generally accepted international criteria regarding the curricular reform; and (3) the reference to the point of view of the reform process (www.edu.ro/cartealb.htm, p.10).

Starting with the 1998-1999 school year, the National Curriculum comprises the following elements (Novak et al, 1998):

- National Curriculum for Compulsory Education. Reference Framework: insures the coherence of the curricular system components;
- Educational Framework-Plans for the 1st-12th/13th grades: establish the curricular areas, the subjects of study, and time resources for each;
- Syllabuses: establish the framework and reference objectives, learning activities' examples, learning contents, and the performance curricular standards for each discipline included into the educational framework plans;
- Guides, Methodological Norms, and Support Materials which describe the enforcement and monitoring conditions of the curricular process;
- Alternative Textbooks.

According to the Ministry of Education (www.edu.ro/curricnat.htm, 2001, p.1), the new National Curriculum brought considerable improvement in school autonomy for establishing a part of the school disciplines and choosing the optional subjects of study, encouraging the individual study, and adjusting the decisions proportionally to the students' talents and affinities. More specifically, according to the new reform provisions, between 20 % and 45 % of school subjects are established by the specific schools and the students have several alternatives of optional subjects to choose from.

Some subjects have strengthened their position (e.g., technological education and informatics in high school) and the experimental sciences (Physics, Chemistry, and Biology) were expanded by being framed into the international curricular benchmarks. The Romanian and foreign languages have increased their share in the new framework-plans and some subjects were introduced (e.g., Religion) or re-introduced into the school program (e.g., Music and Fine Arts in high school). In addition, the new National Curriculum gives way to the interdisciplinary study, involves the development of the abilities required for free enterprise, takes up the international professional standards and evaluation criteria, therefore, striving to attain European and international compatibility.

The new Educational Framework Plans were gradually enforced as follows: during the 1998-1999 school year for the 1st-5th grades, then during the 1999-2000 for the 6th-9th grades, and finally, during the next school year, 2000-2001, the rest of the high school grades. Within each level of the pre-university education, the Framework-Plans are comprised from two components: (1) a common zone for all students, “Common Trunk” or “Nucleus Curriculum” (Core Curriculum), represented by the minimum number of hours of study for each subject; and (2) the School Decision Curriculum represented by the optional disciplines (electives) and number of hours of study and supplementary hours of study which can be used for an extension of the number of hours of study for several subjects from the common trunk (compulsory). The maximum class hours per week, between 30 and 34, is allocated to the high school students. For compulsory education level, the student weekly schedule ranges between 20 and 23 hours per week for the primary education and between 26 and 30 hours per week for gymnasium (middle

school). Therefore, a students' secondary education daily program has an average of 6 hours during five days per week, all of these along the two school semesters.

Each Framework-Plan comprises seven curricular areas in which are specified all subjects of study for each area (Table 3.2). They are as follows

(www.edu.ro/om3207.htm,1999; www.edu.ro/om3638.htm, 2001):

- Language and Communication: Romanian Language and Literature, Mother Tongue – for minority groups' education, Modern Foreign Languages, 1st and 2nd, Latin Language;
- Mathematics and Natural Sciences: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology;
- Men and Society: Civics, History, Geography, Socio-Human Sciences (Logics, Psychology, Economy, Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy), Religion / History of Religions, History and Minorities' Traditions – for minority groups' education, Entrepreneurial Education;
- Arts: Plastic Education, Music Education, Specialized Artistic Education;
- Physical Education and Sports;
- Technologies: Information Technology, Applied Specialized Technologies;
- Counseling and Orientation: Vocational Orientation and Counseling, Career Information and Counseling.

As far as institutional diversification of schools is concerned, there is a tradition in Romania, like in many other countries from Europe and overseas, of the existence of schools for highly talented children. Consequently, except for General Education and General Education for Minorities, the middle school level comprises the other four

Table 3.2

EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK-PLANS

Romanian Secondary Schools (5th-12th Grades): 2001-2002

CURRICULAR AREA / SUBJECT OF STUDY	NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK ON SUBJECT							
	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION	9-10	8-9	8-9	9-10	6-9	5-10	5-11	5-11
Romanian Language	5	4	4	4	4	3-4	3-4	3-4
Modern Language 1	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	2	2-3	2-3	2-3
Modern Language 2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Latin Language	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	2
MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES	5-6	8	10	9-10	4-11	4-11	0-10	0-9
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	1-4	0-4	0-4	0-4
Physics	-	2	2	2	1-3	0-3	0-3	0-3
Chemistry	-	-	2	2	1-2	0-3	0-3	0-2
Biology	1-2	2	2	1-2	1-2	0-2	0-2	0-2
MAN AND SOCIETY	3-5	3-5	4-5	6-7	4-6	3-8	4-10	4-9
Civics	0-1	0-1	1-2	1-2	-	-	-	-
History	1-2	1-2	1-2	2	1-2	1-3	1-3	2-3
Geography	1-2	1-2	1-2	2	1	0-2	0-2	1-2
Socio-Human Sciences:	-	-	-	-	1	1-5	1-5	0-3
Psychology	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1
Economics	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Philosophy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sociology	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pedagogy	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1
Logics	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Religion / History of Religions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Entrepreneurial Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0-1
ARTS	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3	0-14	0-14	0-15	0-15
Plastic Education	1-2	1-2	1-2	0-2	0-11	0-11	0-11	0-11
Music Education	1-2	1-2	1-2	0-2	0-10	0-10	0-13	0-13
Dramatics	-	-	-	-	1-9	0-9	0-12	0-12
Choreography	-	-	-	-	1-14	0-14	0-15	0-15
Architecture / Design	-	-	-	-	11	11	11	11
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS	2-3	2-3	2-3	1-2	2-12	1-12	1-12	1-12
TECHNOLOGIES:	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	0-2	0-5	0-8	0-8
Technological Education / IT	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	0-2	0-3	0-4	0-4
Applied Technologies	-	-	-	-	1-2	1-5	0-8	0-8
COUNSELING AND ORIENTATION	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL HOURS: Nucleus Curriculum	23	25	28	28	26-32	24-29	23-28	20-28
(per week) Optional Curriculum	1-3	1-3	1-2	1-2	2-4	2-6	3-7	4-10
MAXIMUM CLASS HOURS / WEEK	26	28	30	30	30-34	30-33	30-33	30-32

Source: Adapted from www.edu.ro/om3638, 2001; www.edu.ro/om3670, 2001

framework-plans specializing in Music, Choreography, Plastic Arts, and Sports (www.edu.ro/om3638, 2001). Moreover, as has been emphasized by Kotasek (1996), in line with the overwhelming majority of West European countries, but in contrast to the United States, for example, at the upper secondary level has been created a “tripartite system” of educational institutions such as (1) Secondary General School, (2) Secondary Technical School, and (3) Secondary Vocational Schools.

More specifically, according to the Romanian Ministry of Education (2001), within the high school level, lyceum, there are three channels of study:

- Theoretical Channels - comprising four specializations: Philology, Social Sciences, Mathematics – Informatics, and Natural Sciences;
- Technological Channels – comprise three profiles, each of them with several specializations, as follows:
 - A. Services Profile: Tourism and Public Food, Administrative, Postal, and Economics;
 - B. Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Profile: Food Industry, Environmental Protection, Industrial Chemistry, Agricultural – Mountain Agriculture – Veterinarian, Forestry – Wood Processing;
 - C. Technical Profile: Telecommunications – Electronics – Automation – Electrotechnics, Mechanics, Public Works – Constructions, Textiles – Leather;
- Vocational Channels – comprise three profiles as well:
 - A. Visual Arts Profile: Architecture – Ambient Arts – Design, Decorative – Plastic Arts, Choreography, Music, Dramatics;

B. Pedagogic (Education) Profile: Librarian - Documentalist, Instructor -

Animator, Extracurricular Instructor, School Teacher;

C. Sportive Profile: Gymnastics, Football (Soccer), Hockey, Handball, and so on.

Historically, the oldest part of this tripartite system is the Secondary General School or Theoretical Channels. The included specializations prepare students, first, for university studies and, partially, for working in public and private institutions/companies. The second part, Technological Channels, is the most expanded part through those three profiles and thirteen specializations and caters to middle-level qualified personnel within different branches of industry, agriculture, public administration, health services, environmental protection, and various public services. During the last ten years, their popularity with the public has continued to grow. Due to the fact that the Baccalaureate exam/diploma gives students the right to attend any higher education institution, these technological high school specializations place them on completely equal footing with theoretical channel graduates.

Educational, Artistic, and Sportive developments have determined the rise of establishments for specialized vocations, some of them with emphasis on manual work and other skills and service activities. As in the previous specializations, all graduates of vocational profiles with the Baccalaureate diploma, although they have a skilled certificate, have the right to apply for entry to a university-level institution. Overall, compared with the other educational levels, even the university level, these changes and the newly emerging private school sector are the most extensive and represent a significant acceleration in the quantitative and qualitative reform development of upper secondary education.

The new educational curriculum, conceived as an equilibrium between the nucleus curriculum and the school decision curriculum, contributes to the decentralization and the curricular decisions flexibility on the school unit level, and is considered the most salient reform in post-revolutionary Romania. At the same time, the new syllabuses, as the didactical and curricular tools, conduct to a new didactical vision in elaboration of the new textbooks and guide the teaching/learning process, as well student assessment. Unloading the syllabuses and textbooks of unnecessary amounts of information; shifting from the syllabuses with the focus on contents to syllabuses with the focus on objectives; promoting the active student-oriented didactical strategies; extending the free market for an unlimited number of alternative textbooks; and opening the educational process to a multidisciplinary approach are valuable objectives within the curricular reform process.

The systemic curriculum reform, which is currently in effect, includes the evaluation dimension connected to the definition of the content and students' performance standards. Romanian students are individually evaluated traditionally on the numerical scale from 1 to 10. The system helps teacher to separate the students' performance on a very tight scale. It is very meticulous work, which requires significant effort from teachers but, if used professionally, it can offer an excellent grading. But according to the OECD Report (2000), this traditional model of evaluation depends too much on the individual characteristics of teachers, classes, or even schools, therefore, it can be extremely subjective, with significant discrepancy between schools and geographical zones, and even the discrimination potential which can increase inequalities between students from different schools. As a result, the educational reform grants a special attention for defining the student performance standards and standardized testing.

Evaluation represents a managerial instrument as well, being evaluated not only the students but also their teachers, school principals, schools, the system innovators, and the educational politics.

Secondary Teachers in the Context of Change

The curriculum reform is a crucial segment of the educational reform process, but it has little chance of success if it is not accompanied by parallel initiatives to reorganize and improve initial and in-service teacher training. Due to the fact that the reform of education has been undertaken to introduce radically new practices, the curricula now include subjects which were not taught before. They are designed to offer a wider scope of choice which increases the importance of a teachers' role, which means that their training is a major educational objectives. Although teachers are important agents of change, they themselves must change their attitude toward the changes.

Ever since 1994, the share of teaching staff has registered 2.5 % from the total working population of the country. For a school population of 19.3 % from the population, Romania is reaching the European standards (Novak, 1998). Compared with a general unemployment tendency, education is the only domain in which there has been a spectacular increase of the didactical personnel, high school teachers, especially. According to the Romanian Ministry of Education (2000), during the 1999-2000 school year, the secondary school accounted for 178,265 teachers, the student-teacher ratio decreasing from 37:1, in 1989, to only 12.5:1.

Starting from the fact that the curriculum reform must initiate modifications in all educational fields, governmental dispositions were elaborated during the 1998-1999

school year on the implementation of programs for the continuous training of the teaching, advisory staff, and control bodies in the pre-university education.

Beginning with the 1999-2000 school year, the initial training of the educational staff was standardized for both Romanian and minority education. If the training of pre-school and primary school teachers can be achieved in the Pedagogical Colleges, according to Order 4758/1998 of the Romanian Ministry of Education, the secondary school teachers are trained only in the higher education institutions. The key-institutions that organize programs for the continuous training and/or refresher courses for pre-university education are the Houses of the Teaching Staff in each country. In order to insure the requirements in the field of training, the Houses of the Teaching Staff cooperate at professional level with schools, school inspectorates, regional centers, universities, the Ministry of Education, non-governmental organizations, and independent experts.

The professional training and regular retraining of the Romanian teachers is achieved through several exams and refreshes courses. These programs take place within higher education institutions, under the Ministry of Education's coordination. The most important are the certification exams and the exams for granting the didactical grades. The certification exam, called in Romania the Didactical Tenure Grade, can be obtained by teachers after at least two years of teaching experience. This exam is compulsory for teachers in order to keep their positions in the Romanian educational system and consists of a special school inspection and several written and oral exams in a particular specialty, teaching methods, and pedagogy. The assistant professors from universities, with at least three years experience in teaching, that decide to teach in the pre-university education,

after a special school inspection, are granted the tenure. The tenure exam can be offered a maximum of three times during five years and failing to pass leads to cancellation of the individual employment contract. But, once the certification is obtained it is valid for life and is then recognized for any didactical positions which can be taken in accordance with the individual education and the position requirements, respectively.

The Didactical Grades II and I, which are not compulsory, can be obtained after passing several difficult long term requirements as follows. The attendance at the exam for granting the Didactical Grade II requires at least four years of teaching experience after Tenure exam. The examination consists of the following steps: two regular and one special school inspections (during the four years); a written test in the respective specialty and the teaching methodology; and an oral exam in pedagogy with some notions of psychology and educational sociology. The university lecturers, with at least six years of teaching experience, can obtain the Didactical Grade II after having a special school inspection in the proper specialty.

In order to qualify for granting the Didactical Grade I, the didactical personnel with a teaching experience, as Teachers Grade II, for at least four years and with special results in the educational activity, has to pass the following examination steps: (1) an admission examination; (2) two current school inspections and a special school inspection along the four years, all required to be evaluated with the maximum grade (from a scale between 1 and 10); (3) the elaboration of a methodological-scientific paper, coordinated by a professor from a nearby university; (4) the defense of the paper in front of the examination commission in accordance with the Minister of Education's methodology. The didactical personnel with the doctoral degree is granted the Didactical

Grade I on the base of a special school inspection (The Status of the Didactical Personnel, 1997).

These exams are traditional for Romanian education, but the new methodology has increased the requirements for granting the Didactical Grades II and I through the admission examinations and the introduction of two pre-inspections in class before the major special inspections. Instead, according to my experience, the time between these three programs of examinations has been shortened from five to four years. Those individuals who have received the grade 10 in their examinations either for Tenure or the Didactical Grade II have the right to proceed to the next step one year earlier than the legal provision.

After 1989, the didactical norm for secondary education teachers was reduced from over 20 teaching hours per week to 18 hours. In addition, the teachers who have over 25 years of teaching experience and the Didactical Grade I have the right to have their teaching load reduced to only 16 hours per week. This provision is applied to all secondary teachers within rural schools. The annual paid leave has remained the same, at least 62 working days, excepting Sundays and the legal holidays, which must be established during the school breaks only. In addition, teachers have the right to obtain one school year unpaid leave, at their request, one time for every ten years of teaching, with the reservation of the proper position in school. And, finally, for individuals who have to write a doctoral thesis, they have the right to receive a paid leave for six months, one time in their career.

The educational reform has brought significant changes in the teacher profession, but there still are several major issues of the didactical personnel which must be taken

into consideration as follows: very low salaries for teachers; teachers' migration from rural to urban schools or from schools to other better paid industries; funding for rural schools is low, especially, in the remote areas; still maintaining the bureaucratic centralism; and, last but not least, the teacher's status deficiency. Although secondary teachers, through their number and, through their mission, constitute a very important educational category, their status is considered more occupational than professional. Many efforts have been made toward teachers since 1989 but, on the long term, it seems necessary for even more profound reforms, to maintain authorities' mentalities and the reconsideration of the systems of values within the Romanian society.

Summary

The new reform of education in Romania has been elaborated in the context of removal of the educational communist's inheritance, on the one hand, and moving toward a market economy and a pluralistic society, on the other hand, being designed to "bring Romanian education, at all levels, into line with Western European practice" (Marga, 1999). If the communist distributive state has generated a passive expectation, the market economy, after 1989, started to generate personal initiative and competition. Consequently, Romanian education answered to these new requirements through a complex diversification, starting with vocational and high school levels by adjusting their curricula and teaching methods.

The changes stipulated along each stage of the democratic reform covered a wide spectrum of problems from which could be individualized several major goals such as shifting education from quantity to quality, from polytechnic to humanistic, from dominant state to private and alternative schools, from syllabuses with focus on contents

to their objectives which aim the final learning outputs, from centralization of the system to decentralization, from exclusive domestic resources to a diversification of education supply and advanced forms of international cooperation, and so on (Table 3.3). In this perspective, the educational reform's provisions clearly delineate the new education from the communist one to promoting the democratic education principles.

Legislative and institutional reforms enacted after 1990, along all four educational reform stages, have a particular importance accelerating these major changes for reestablishing the education system (Table 3.4). As a result of achieving the international compatibility in education, Romania has a greater opportunity to move closer to the European Union's structures.

As part of a larger pedagogical reform, curriculum reform could be considered one of the most important components, even the key tool of the educational reform. Through its flexibility between the common trunk, comprising compulsory subjects of study, and the optional subjects, at the schools' disposition, the new national curriculum significantly contributes to the decentralization of the educational process. In accordance with its provisions, the major changes at the upper secondary education level are the most extensive and represent a significant acceleration in both the quantitative and qualitative reform development.

. As Leclercq (1996, p. 73) noted, quoting the Romanian Ministry of Education, teachers in Romania are considered to be "the irreplaceable agents" of the educational reform and, therefore, the modernization of teacher training and retraining based on the latest educational and psychological knowledge is an educational priority.

Table 3.3

STAGES OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN ROMANIA
Major Events and Characteristics

Stage 1 DE- STRUCTURING 1990	Stage 2 STABILIZATION 1991 - 1992	Stage 3 RESTRUCTURING 1993 - 1995	Stage 4 COMPREHENSIVE EDUC. REFORM 1996 onwards
<p><u>Major Shifts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from quantity to quality - from the polytechnic education to the universal education in humanistic and social science <p><u>Measures:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eliminated the main instruments of communist education - compulsory education / 8th grade - eliminated the 10th grade high school exam - 36 students per class maximum - 18 class hours / week ; 16 hours/ week / rural zones or over 25 years of teaching experience - elective training - increased the number of general secondary schools from 5 % to 40 % - diversification of secondary and post-secondary education - guaranteed minorities' education - intensified foreign and classic language teaching - ensured the university autonomy - strong science ed. 	<p><u>Legal Framework:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1991: Romanian Constitution (Article 32) - free access for all - better quality - equality of opportunity - private and alternative education - university autonomy - diversification of education supply - freedom for religion education - education rights for national minorities <p><u>Educational Policies:</u> Decision 461/1991 (strengthen earlier decisions and brought a few changes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - alternative education - diversification of secondary education - designation of higher education structure - Ministry of Education's responsibility for special education <p><u>1992: first draft of the Education Bill</u></p>	<p>1993: Romania became member of the Council of Europe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moving closer to the EU structures: improvement of new quality standards in education <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new education policy - foreign co-financing - legal framework - restructuring the education system <p><u>1993: Education Policies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The White Paper on Education in Romania - Higher Education Reform in Romania <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decentralization - curricular reform and European compatibility - scientific research <p><u>1995: The Law of Education:</u> delineates the new education from the communist one</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promoting the democratic principle - guarantees the right for a differentiated education <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national priority - free of charge - state monopoly in education is suppressed - open character - Capacity exam (8th gr.) - Master's Degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An acceleration of the initiated reforms <p><u>Steps:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1998-2000: finalizing the transitional educational reform - after 2000: a Systemic Reform <p><u>Plan of Reform:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decentralization - education contents reform (education framework and national curriculum) - better relationship: schools/local authorities - infrastructure quality - scientific research / changing the character of education / connection to the worldwide electronic communication net - international cooperation <p><u>Institutional and Legislative Reforms:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1997: The Status of Didactical Personnel - 1998: The National Council on Curricula <p><u>New Steps:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 yrs./ compulsory ed. - implementation of the comprehensive reform - new curricula structure - new forms of international cooperation - changing mentality

Source: Adapted from Birzea (1996); Butuca (2001); Mitter (1992); Novak (1998)

Table 3.4

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS
IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
1990 - Present

DATE	REFORM	CONTENT / OBJECTIVES
1990	Government Decision	Organization of the First School Year after the 1989 Revolution
1991	Government Decision # 461	Alternative Education Models Diversification of Secondary Education Designation of Higher Education Structure
1991	New Romanian Constitution	Art. 32: Sanctioned Major Directions for Education: forms and language of instruction; better quality; free access; equality of opportunity; private education and alternative schools; diversification of education supply; university autonomy; freedom for religious education
1992	Educational Bill	First Draft
1993	The White Paper on Education in Romania	Educational Policy: decentralization; reorganizing teacher training; curricular reform & European compatibility; alternative textbooks; reforming vocational education
1993	Higher Education Reform in Rom.	Reforming higher education and university scientific research; international cooperation
1993	Law / Accreditation of Higher Ed. Inst.	Sets minimum conditions to be accepted as part of the education system
1995	The Law of Education	Regulates the organization and functioning of the National System of Education
1997	Status of Didactical Staff	Positions; competences; responsibilities; rights; obligations; salaries / retirement; refresh courses
1998	Nat. Council on Curricula	Development of National Curriculum
1998	Nat. Office for Evaluation and Examination	Assurance of professional expertise for educational evaluation and examination
1998	Nat. Agency for Professional Training	A better coordination for professional training
1999	Nat. Ctr. for Diploma Recognition	Criteria for recognition and equivalency of diplomas: pre-university, university, post-university
1998-1999	Curricular Reform	Pre-University Education: Ed. Framework-Plans; Syllabuses; Alternative Textbooks

Source: Adapted from Birzea (1996); Butuca et al (2001); Novak et al (1998); Wilson (1993); Ed. Law (1995); Status of Didactical Staff (1997)

CHAPTER 4

GEOGRAPHY IN ROMANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Geography has been and continues to be an important subject of study at all educational levels in Romanian schools, especially in secondary schools. As a result, geographic literacy has become a permanent preoccupation for all Romanian geography teachers. Being permanently placed in the national curriculum, Geography of Romania has even been used by Romanian authorities as a tool in their politics for affirming and protecting national unity. Although partially descriptive, the study of geography offers students many experiences allowing the development of some knowledge, concepts competences, values, and specific attitudes.

According to Bargaoanu (1966), Veza (1967), and Ilinca (2000), the scope of teaching geography and geology in school consists of instruction and education of the students, formation and development of the geographical and geological thinking. Additionally, the scope of teaching geography and geology includes the stimulation of the continued desire for the conscious cognition and knowledge of nature and society. At the same time, modern geographical and geological education pursues the formation of a positive attitude and behavior toward the environment of some instrumental-practical competences necessary in daily life. It also promotes the student's personality. Thus the motivation geography provides at each level of study in secondary school is very strong and there always was an old tradition of studying geography in Romanian schools.

Historical Background of Geography Instruction in Romania

Geography development registered a significant improvement during the second half of the 19th century through the influence of the Alexander von Humboldt's activity. However, the teaching of Romanian geography did not reach a particularly high level of quality. According to Veza et al (1967), since the second half of the 19th century, geography and pedagogy textbooks in Romania recommended the use of some advanced methods and principles (for that time) in teaching. The comparison method, using the local environment as a teaching resource supply developed a better tool for teaching more complex geographical components.

A significant contribution in the geography development as a science and in teaching of geography in Romania was developed by the Romanian Society of Geography, established in 1875, and by the Pedagogical Seminars, established in 1880. Under their directions, the geography textbooks, which were written at the end of the 19th century, suggested new methodical recommendations regarding teaching of geography. Using these updated textbooks, geography students had more opportunities to perform their teaching practice.

During the first decades of the 20th century, a special importance for Romanian geography was the establishment of the first university chairs of geography at the University of Bucharest in 1900, at the University of Iasi in 1904, and at the University of Cluj in 1918. One of the most valuable Romanian geographers, Simion Mehedinti, the first geography professor at the University of Bucharest, has had a significant role in methodological guidance of the geography teachers from secondary schools. He also played a crucial part in organizing monthly methodical and scientific seminars and

managing the annual conferences of the geography teachers. In his remarkable book, *Terra*, Simion Mehedinti emphasizes not only the fundamental methods used in the theoretical research (e.g., analysis and synthesis), and those used by the applied geography (e.g., geographical observation and description), but he also emphasized the improvement of teaching methods in geography. Many of them were reflected in his geography textbooks for secondary education (e.g., the method of conversation).

During the interwar period, besides Simion Mehedinti, a valuable activity in preparing the geographical students had George Vilsan, geography professor at the University of Bucharest. He emphasized the inductive method in teaching of geography and, in addition, he strongly recommended be the intuitive method used, the study of the local environment, field geographical lessons and, as much as possible, using different teaching supplies.

Many secondary geography teachers have had an important role in students training. Future geography teachers, especially through their lessons, developed the students interest for studying geography. Moreover, many teachers were preoccupied in writing geography books or textbooks and even the methodological guides for the teaching of geography in secondary schools. During this period of time, the geographical literature became richer through the publication of big and diversified number of books, from which the Economical Geography textbooks for commercial schools and the first textbooks for vocational education were emphasized.

Unfortunately, these successful directions in the geography field were stopped or shifted to a different interpretation by the second war and, even worse, by the long standing communist domination. This does not mean that geography research and the

teaching of geography did not register any progress, but the orientation was shifted from the democratic values of Western Europe to those imposed by the Russian domination. In spite of the political orientation of the geography lessons to the East, Romanian geographers, university professors, and geography teachers from secondary schools, through their professional dedication and moral values for patriotism and democracy, to which they were permanently looking for, brought a real contribution in the development of the Romanian geographic education. Their efforts were always accompanied by the Romanian Society of Geography Sciences, with its county branches, through the national conferences, the national geographic camps, and the monthly geographical magazine, *Terra*, which reunited the scientific and methodological research's results in the geography field.

In the 1970s, key areas in geography – Physical Geography, Human Geography, and Economical Geography – were removed from the high school curriculum by the communist regime. They were replaced by two introductory courses into the Fundamental Problems in World Geography, for the 10th grade, and the Fundamental Problems in Geography of Romania, for the 12th grade. The new courses contained several selected topics from both Physical Geography and Human Geography. At the same time, Geology curriculum was added to Physical Geography, but as an independent subject of study. Geology was established to be taught to the 11th grade students of the theoretical high schools, the scientific sections, and, of course, in the specialized industrial high schools. Therefore, except for several years, geography was permanently present in the national curriculum and even used by Romanian authorities as a tool in affirming and protecting the national unity.

After 1989, the communist indoctrination in teaching geography was gradually removed. The Educational Reform's orientation in the development of the National Curriculum brought significant changes within Geography Curriculum and, consequently, in the teaching of geography.

Geography in Romanian Secondary Schools Prior to the Reform of Education

Sequence of Geography in Secondary Schools

The educational framework plans, before 1999, included (with some exceptions) the teaching of geography to all grades, in the middle and high school, and of geology at the 11th grade as follows: General Physical Geography (5th and 9th grades), Geography of Continents (6th and 7th grades), Geography of Romania (8th and 12th grades), World Human and Economical Geography (10th grade), Environmental Geography and Geology (11th grade). Although the general tendency was the creation of an equilibrium between Physical and Human Geography, in Romanian geographical education Physical Geography continues to be a more emphasized study, especially within the middle school geography (Tables 4.1).

Middle School Geography Curriculum

Romanian students are familiarized with teaching of geography, as an independent subject of study, starting with the primary educational level (e.g., the Locality, County – the 3rd grade; Geography of Romania - the 4th grade), but a thorough study of geography starts in the 5th grade, the first level of secondary school in Romania. In accordance with the middle school geography framework plans and syllabuses, geography was taught in

Table 4.1
SEQUENCE OF GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY
IN ROMANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

SCHOOLING LEVEL	PREVIOUS REFORM OF EDUCATION (Before 1999)	EDUCATIONAL REFORM PROVISIONS (Since 1999)
MIDDLE SCHOOL 5 th Grade	Physical Geography (focus: physical geographical components only)	General Geography: Introductory Elements (focus: physical and human)
6 th Grade	Geography of Continents: Africa, Americas, Australia, Oceania, Antarctica (focus: physical and human)	Geography of Europe (focus: physical and human)
7 th Grade	Geography of Continents: Europe and Asia (focus: physical and human)	Geography of Extra-European Continents (focus: physical and human)
8 th Grade	Geography of Romania (focus: physical and human)	Geography of Romania (focus: physical and human)
HIGH SCHOOL 9 th Grade	General Physical Geography (focus: physical only)	Physical Geography: The Earth – The People's Planet (focus: physical and human)
10 th Grade	World Economical Geography (focus: human only)	Human Geography (focus: human only)
11 th Grade	Environmental Geography (focus: physical and human)	Environmental Geography and Fundamental Problems of the Contemporary World (focus: physical and human)
11 th Grade	Geology (focus: physical only)	
12 th Grade	Geography of Romania (focus: physical and human)	Geography of Romania – Fundamental Problems (focus: physical and human)

Source: The 1998-1999 Geography Syllabuses. Romanian Ministry of Education;
The Geography Syllabuses. Romanian Ministry of Education,
www.edu.ro/pgeo.htm (Minister's Orders: # 4237/08.23.1999/5th-8th grades;
#3371/03.02.1999/9th grade; # 5086/12.05.1999; #4805/10.05.2000/11th-12th

the middle school in a schedule of two hours per week (2x50 minutes periods), thus averaging around 64 hours per school year, for each level.

The geography curriculum, elaborated by the Romanian Ministry of Education, established for the middle school level very diversified topics. For instance, Physical Geography comprises topics, developed for the 5th grade level, from a very wide range of geographic fields such as Mathematical Geography, Geomorphology, Geology, Meteorology, Climatology, Oceanography, Hydrology, and Biogeography. The 6th grade curriculum includes teaching of the continents: Africa, Americas, Antarctica, and Australia with Oceania. For the 7th grade, topics include the geography of Europe and Asia. The Geography of Romania is taught to the 8th grade students and is structured in three parts: Physical Geography, Population and Settlements, and Economical Geography. The 8th grade students have the opportunity to use the core information about Geography of Romania taught in the 4th grade and to acquired acquisitions more knowledge through the development of the concepts' difficulty and of their use.

The content of all these geographic disciplines substantially enhance the students' geographic vocabulary and the understanding of many geographical elements and phenomena on the Earth's surface. In order to achieve high performance, teachers frequently combine different methods of teaching , e.g., expositive, conversation, observation, comparison - contrast, issues questions, demonstration, textbooks and other related books, field trips, maps, geographical globes, and other intuitive materials. Their lessons thus stimulate the students' interest in studying geography. Unfortunately, many Romanian schools (especially in the villages) have poor material resources and limited information. Unlike high school classes, with only 1 hour per week, the middle

school's classes have more opportunities to be orientated to the diverse local geographical applications, which means much more interesting students-centered lessons.

High School Geography Curriculum

The geography curriculum has established the teaching of geography at the upper secondary level (9th-12th grades) with one hour per week, respectively 34 hours per school year, each level, except for the classes with humanistic profiles (e.g., Foreign Languages, Philology-History) which study geography in two hours per week (68 hours per school year), at the 9th and 12th grades (Appendices A and C). At the same time, Geology is a distinct subject of study, taught at the 11th grade, in one hour per week, and is valid only for those classes with scientific profiles (e.g., Mathematics-Physics, Physics-Chemistry; Chemistry-Biology). Geology is a perfect complementary subject for Geography, for Physical Geography, especially, which leads to a more thorough understanding of the Earth's fundamental problems as a planet.

The high school geography syllabuses (1998-1999) comprise either the same geography topics as at the middle school level, but more developed (e.g., at the 9th grade, General Physical Geography and at the 12th grade, Geography of Romania) or absolutely new topics (e.g., at the 10th grade, World Human and Economical Geography and at the 11th grade, Environmental Geography and Geology). The contents are very well structured and cover a very wide geographical spectrum as follows:

(1) General Physical Geography (Appendix A) is taught to the 9th grade students and has the general orientation of the 5th grade geography. At this level, all chapters are well individualized (e.g., Mathematical Geography: the Earth – a Cosmic Body; Geology-Geomorphology: Lithosphere's Dynamics and the Relief; Notions of Meteorology and

Climatology; Oceanography-Hydrology: the Planetary Ocean and Continental Water Bodies; Biogeography: Vegetation and Fauna, containing lessons with a richer geographical content, and two others chapters such as General Notions of Cartography and Soil Science (Pedology).

(2) World Human and Economical Geography (Appendix A) is taught for the first time to the 10th grade students in the secondary education level. The content of this curriculum emphasizes three parts: Political Geography: Political Map of the Contemporary World; Human Geography: World Population and Human Settlements Geography; and World Economical Geography: World Natural Resources, Agriculture, Industry, Transportations, Tourism, and International Economical Relations.

(3) Environmental Geography (Appendix B) is another geographical discipline introduced as an individualized subject of study at the upper secondary educational level and is established to be taught to the 11th grade. It contains the following chapters: Theoretical Problems, the Relationships between the Environment's Components, Types of Geographical Landscapes, the Influence of Human Activities toward the Environment, and Priority Domains of the Environmental Protection and Conservation.

(4) Geology (Appendix B), scheduled for the 11th grade students, starts with an introductory lesson: Geology's Subject Matter and its Domains, then the problems are structured on the chapters such as notions of the Earth's Physics, Mineralogy, Paleontology, Petrology, Structural and Geotectonic Geology and, Stratigraphy and Historical Geology, and the Protection of the Geological Patrimony in Romania.

(5) Geography of Romania (Appendix C) which is taught to the 12th grade students, logically, continues and develops the structure of the 8th grade curriculum: the Unity and

Harmony of the Romanian Territory, Natural Frame, Population and Settlements, Romania's Economy (Agriculture and the Industrial Processing of the Agricultural Products, Industry, Transportations and the Ways of Communication, Tourism, Trade and the Economic Relations of Romania), and the Regional Characteristics of the Romanian Territory. Unlike the 8th grade curriculum, the 12th grade geography curriculum introduces at the end of the proposed topics a developed synthesis (physical and human-economical geographic) which includes an overview regarding the complexity of the Romanian geographical regions.

Unfortunately, with few exceptions, high school geography is taught for one hour per week, therefore, during 34 hours per year only. The theoretical materials, with a higher level of difficulty, is too condensed for one hour per week, thus requiring a big effort from both teachers and students. Consequently, teaching geography in these heavily loaded classes must be transformed into a real "art" having to combine diverse didactical methods and procedures. The age of students, the relative superior endowment with teaching supplies, and the introduction of a new technology in a part of high schools (especially in the larger towns) permit the teachers, even partially, to orientate their teaching to the student-centered lessons. But Romania, because of the long standing communist isolation, still maintains a traditional educational system. Since many schools lacked sufficient teaching supplies, teacher-centered lessons still remained primordial in class.

High school geography teachers through their specific subjects of study, especially World Human and Economical Geography and Environmental Geography, can realize valuable debates within issue-centered lessons such as: global warming, soil

erosion, industrial pollution, hunger, desertification, etc., thus directing and supervising the students' research within the local environmental issues. There is already a tradition in Romanian high schools for students to participate in research reports at different local, zonal, or national conferences, especially those organized by the county board of education and the Society of Geography branches. In addition, in the geography teachers load there are the students' preparation for Geography Olympiads and for their exams: high school graduation (baccalaureate exam) and matriculation at the universities.

Reform's Implications for the Teaching of Geography

New Geography Curriculum: Overview

The elaboration of the new geography curriculum, after the 1989 revolution, was determined by the changes created through the introduction of the new framework plans for compulsory education and high school education, respectively, the modification of instructional time, the inclusion of this discipline in the curricular area "Man and Society," and the shift from the traditional geography, a descriptive one, to a modern geography, a geography for life (Novak et al, 1998; Minister's Order, # 4237 / 1999). As a result, the correlation of geography with other disciplines was adopted into the formula of the compulsory curriculum-nucleus (core curriculum) doubled by an extended curriculum, at the school's disposition (electives or optional curriculum).

The new framework plans for both middle and high school levels contain seven curricular areas, geography being included in the same curricular area, "Man and Society", as an independent subject of study. The instructional time, after revising and discarding of the too heavily loaded syllabuses and textbooks, has been slightly modified for the teaching of geography in secondary schools. Thus, according to Minister Order

3638 / 2001, only Geography of Romania, for the 8th grade, has allocated, within the compulsory curriculum-nucleus, 2 hours per week for teaching. The other three levels of the middle school, the 5th, 6th, and 7th grades have allocated 1-2 hours per week, in function of the students and schools' interests. At the high school level, within the curriculum-nucleus, all grades (9th through 12th) from all three educational channels (theoretical, technological, and vocational) have allocated only 1 hour per week, except the Social Science specialization, from the Theoretical Channel, in which geography is taught in 2 hours per week from the 10th to 12th grade students (Minister Order 3670 / 2001).

Optional Curriculum (Electives)

A significant reform implication in teaching of geography is realized through the extended curriculum or curriculum of the school's disposition (optional). According to the Minister Order 3670 / 2001, the optional curriculum for the upper secondary school classes must be used, in the first place, for the subjects within the curricular area corresponding to the high school specialization. At the same time, it is remarkable that the development of a "vertical offer", for the 9th-12th grades assured a certain continuity of the study and the offer of several "optional packages" which contain different subjects of study from which the students could choose in function of their interests (Table 4.2).

Romanian high schools offer four categories of optional curriculum for the teaching of geography such as (A) optional for a thorough study; (B) optional for an extended curriculum; (C) optional as a new discipline; and (D) optional as an integrator theme.

Table 4.2

SYSTEMS OF “CURRICULUM OPTIONAL VERTICAL”

Romanian High Schools: Geography

PHYLOLOGIC

- 9th grade: Physical Geography and Human Society (B)
- 10th grade: Culture and Civilization of a country whose language is studied (I) (D)
- 11th grade: Culture and Civilization of a country whose language is studied (II) (D)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography (B)

SOCIAL SCIENCES

- 9th grade: Physical Geography and Hyman Society (B)
- 10th grade: Social and Cultural Geography (C)
- 11th grade: Fundamental Problems (B)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography (B)

MATHEMATICS-INFORMATICS

- 9th grade: Cartography (C) or Planet Science (C)
- 10th grade: Applied Cartography (C)
- 11th grade: Types of Environment (C), Geology (C), or Hazards (C)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography (B)

NATURAL SCIENCES

- 9th grade: Introduction in Geology (C)
- 10th grade: Quaternary's Geology (C)
- 11th grade Hazards (C)
- 12th Romanian Geology (C); Romania – Regional Geography (B)

TECHNIC (all specializations)

- 9th grade: Introduction in Geology (C)
- 10th grade: Natural Resources and Industrial Geography (school profile) (B)
- 11th grade: Environment Protection (C)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography (B)

(continued)

INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY

- 9th grade: Mineralogy and Petrography (C)
- 10th grade: Natural Resources for Chemical Industry and their Processing (C)
- 11th grade: Environmental Protection (C)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography (B)

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- 9th grade: Climatology and Hydrology (A)
- 10th grade: Environment and Human Society (B)
- 11th grade: Geo-Ecological Factors and Environmental Protection (B)
- 12th grade: Romania – Quality and Environmental Protection (C)
Romania – Regional Geography (B)

FORESTRY AND WOOD PROCESSING

- 9th grade: Climatology and Hydrology (A)
- 10th grade: Romania / World Forest Geography and Wood Industry (B)
- 11th grade: Geo-Ecological Factors and Environmental Protection (C)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography (B)

AGRICULTURAL AND MOUNTAIN AGRICULTURE

- 9th grade: Geomorphology, Climatology, and Pedogeography (A)
- 10th grade: Romania / World Agriculture Geography (B)
- 11th grade: Agricultural Environment (C); Mountain Environment (B)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography; Romania – Mountain Regions' Geography; Romania – Agricultural Regions' Geography (B);

FOOD INDUSTRY

- 9th grade: Romania / World Agricultural Geography and Agricultural Products' Industrial Processing (C)
- 10th grade: Human Geography (from common trunk)
- 11th grade: Environmental Geography and Fundamental Problems of the Contemporary World (from common trunk)
- 12th grade: Romania – Regional Geography (B)

TOURISM AND PUBLIC FOOD

- 9th grade: World Natural Tourist Objectives (C)
- 10th grade: World Anthropic Objectives (C)
- 11th grade: Global Tourism (C)
- 12th grade: Tourism in Romania (C); Romania – Regional Geography (B)

(continued)

ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE

- 9th grade: Cartography (C)
- 10th grade: Geography of Resources (B); Political Geography (B)
Economic Geography (B)
- 11th grade: Economy and Sustainable Development (D); Territory Planning (C)
- 12th grade: Administrative Geography (C); Romania – Regional Geography (B)

POSTAL

- 9th grade: Cartography (C)
- 10th grade: Political Geography (B)
- 11th grade: Transportations and Telecommunications (D)
- 12th grade: Administrative Geography (C); Romania – Regional Geography (B)

SPORTIVE

- 9th grade: Climatology and Balneology (D)
- 10th grade: Human Geography (from the common trunk)
- 11th grade: Environmental Geography and Fundamental Problems of the
Contemporary Geography (from the common trunk)
- 12th grade: Geography of the Sportive Competitions (C)

ARTS

- 9th grade: Nature and Art (D)
- 10th grade: Human Society and Art (D)
- 11th grade: Environment and Its Planning (D)
- 12th grade: Romania – Cultural Geography (D)

EDUCATION

- 9th grade: Planetology (C); Introduction in Geology (C)
- 10th grade: Social and Cultural Geography (C)
- 11th grade: Environmental Research (C)
- 12th grade: Native County Geography (C)

Source: Romanian Ministry of Education, 2001

The optional curriculum for a thorough study in geography (A) offers the possibility that some topics from different chapters of the curriculum-nucleus can be studied more, which means allocating 1 1/2 hours or even 2 hours per week. Also, more case studies could be developed. It is very well known that the geography textbooks have been projected to be studied in an hour per week, but some chapters are much more developed, therefore, these chapters could be taken into consideration for a thorough study. An extended curriculum (B) can be realized by adding new contents which are not comprised in the compulsory-nucleus, but connected with the compulsory curriculum (e.g., a topic about the international cooperation of the study of outer space can be added to the chapter regarding “The Earth in Cosmos”). The optional as a new discipline (C) is determined in function with the objectives or competences which the school has planned to develop within the educational process. As a result, many subjects could be chosen such as Geology, Cartography, Pedology, Urban Planning, Natural Resources, Hazards, which are great complementary subjects for the study of geography. And, finally, the optional as an integrator theme (D) could focus on subjects with a wider spectrum of information (e.g., Meteorology, Oceanography, Nature and Art, Culture and Civilization of different countries or regions) within the curricular area corresponding to the high school specialization (Table 4.2). Of course, these suggestions have only an approximated character. Each geography teacher, according to his/her personal options, student interest, or the specific characteristics of school, has to create a coherent offer in order to satisfy all requirements.

Compulsory Curriculum-Nucleus (Core Curriculum)

The structure of the new geography curriculum includes: the framework objectives for the entire period of study, reference objectives and examples of learning activities, contents for every grade, and the performance curricular standards applied at the end of the compulsory or high school educational period.

The subject matter is organized for every grade within the secondary education level as follows (Minister Orders 4237/1999; 3371/1999; 5086/1999; 4805/2000; Tables 4:1):

Middle School:

- the 5th grade: General Geography-Introductory Elements;
- the 6th grade: Geography of Europe;
- the 7th grade: Geography of Extra-European Continents;
- the 8th grade: Geography of Romania .

High School:

- the 9th grade: Physical Geography: The Earth- The People's Planet;
- the 10th grade: Human Geography;
- the 11th grade: Environmental Geography and Fundamental Problems of the Contemporary World;
- the 12th grade: Geography of Romania- Fundamental Problems

The amount and progression of the curriculum's elements take account of the existence of the curricular cycles. Thus, the 5th and 6th grades continue the introduction and familiarization of the students with the specific geographic domains (started in the 4th grade), the 7th and the 8th grades, and then in high school, the 9th and 12th grades,

prefigure a thorough study either of the gained knowledge or of the new information through the increase of the difficult concepts and their use. The main changes of the new geography curriculum consist of a new re-arrangement in the subjects of study for a few grades, the simplification of the traditional contents of the subjects of study through ridding the texts of unnecessary details, and assuming the new educational dimensions of geography such as the geo-ecological, global, European, economic, and sustainable development dimensions.

Middle School Geography Curriculum. The new geography curriculum for the lower levels of secondary school established at the 5th grade the teaching of General Geography: Introductory Elements instead of Physical Geography only. This new orientation has determined, excepting the revision of the old Physical Geography text, the introduction of an additional material regarding Human Geography (Population and Settlements, Planet Resources, and Economical Activities), in order to facilitate an easier passing and understanding of the future study regarding Regional Geography, at the 6th and 7th grades, and Human Geography, at the 10th grade. Unfortunately, this discipline is taught, in many cases, in only 1 hour per week in the formula of the compulsory curriculum-nucleus, but there is a possibility for the number of hours to be increased through the extended (optional) curriculum.

The 6th and the 7th grade curricula respect the same structure for the teaching of the Geography of Continents, with the same number of teaching hours per week. Instead, the curriculum makers established a new distribution of the continents for each level, granting to the European continent the entire space allocated to the 6th grade geography class. The motivation of this decision is clearly taking into account the fact

that Romania is an European country and is involved in the historical process of adhering to the European Union. On the other hand, the Geography of Extra-European Continents, at the 7th grade level, through the introduction of Asia, the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, has been drastically restructured. It is remarkable the new tendency for studying the traditional customs of different nations, regional associations, structures, institutions, and current territorial classification. Unlike Western classification, Romania, in its geographical studies, is included in Central Europe.

The Geography of Romania continues to be taught at the 8th grade level in two hours per week, but the new curriculum has introduced and emphasized several supplementary topics such as Romanians from Diaspora, Administrative-Territorial Organization, Romania in Europe and in the World (Romania in International Organizations; the Romanian's Place within European and World Economy; Commercial, Economical, Technical, and Scientific Cooperation), and Environmental Problems.

High School Geography Curriculum. Geography curriculum for the 9th grade addresses all students who study this discipline one hour per week. The proposed didactical approach permits the students' familiarization with theoretical aspects and development of some instrumental-practical competences which are necessary in their daily life. The study of Physical Geography, has integrated the current problems of the society pursuing the integration of geography in the curricular area "Man and Society" and the subtitle, "The Earth - The People's Planet", illustrates its connections with the other educational domains from this curricular area.

Although a simplification of the traditional content has already taken place, it is remarkable, on the one hand, the introduction of a new chapter and, on the other hand, the focus on several applied geography topics. The new chapter, entitled the “Environment, Landscape, and Human Society,” details human-environment interaction and emphasizes the society’s responsibility for the environment’s protection and conservation. In order to create a link between theoretical courses and practical activities, the 9th grade curriculum has introduced a number of applied topics in Meteorology, Climatology, and Hydrology. Evolution and climatic tendencies, analysis and data interpretation, climatic and synoptic maps, soils and human activity, followed by modifications of the Earth’s surface are topics strongly recommended. The proposed objectives and contents for the 9th grade open the propitious possibilities for studying in the future the new structures (Geology, Geo-Ecology, Human Geography, Contemporary World’s Fundamental Problems, and Geography of Romania) within the framework of the compulsory curriculum or that at the school’s disposition.

The study of geography at the 10th grade in the high school is centered on “Human Geography” with three major components: Political Geography, Population and Settlements, and Economical Geography. The educational outcomes in Human Geography are going to be satisfied through the development of several domains such as ecological and economical education or European and global education, which are already emphasized within the new 10th grade geography curriculum. Unlike the 9th grade geography curriculum, the curriculum for the 10th grade is built for two alternatives: the compulsory curriculum-nucleus (for classes with one teaching hour per

week) and the thorough curriculum-nucleus (for classes with two hours per week, e.g., the social sciences specialization).

A significant change of this curriculum is the accent on developing some general and specific competences in the human geography field and relieving the chapter “Economical Geography” through a partial renouncement of the content regarding the industry and agriculture branches which were organized for teaching in a traditional manner with very many data. At the same time, new titles can be identified, some of them having either practical applications (e.g., calculation and graphic representation of the population density and structure) or a significant contribution in the understanding of the dynamic evolution of the anthropic environment (e.g., Urban Dynamics). The study of the new chapter, “World Economical and Geopolitical Organizations” will lead to the identification of criteria for establishing these organizations and the perception of the ratio between the global, regional, national, and local dimensions of the socio-economic component of the geographical environment. The respect for natural and human diversity, the curiosity for exploration of the geographic environment, and the conservation and protection of the life environment are the most important values and attitudes promoted by the new human geography curriculum.

The study of the Environmental Geography at the 11th grade and of the Geography of Romania at the 12th grades, logically, continue the study of the natural part of the geographic environment, studied at the 9th grade through Physical Geography, and of the socio-economical part, studied at the 10th grade through Human Geography. The new curricula for the 11th and 12th grades are conceived and put into practice in the same manner like the 10th grade curriculum, with both alternatives: one hour per week for the

majority of the high school specializations, within the compulsory curriculum-nucleus, and two hours per week for the social science classes, within the thorough curriculum-nucleus.

New dimensions will be developed in order to satisfy the educational outcomes such as education for diversity and for Romanian territorial values, together with the previous domains: ecological, economical, European, and global education. The new chapters, “The Fundamental Problems of the Contemporary World”, introduced at the 11th grade, and “Romania in Europe and the Contemporary World”, at the 12th grade, will develop some specific competences such as identification of the contemporary world’s problems regarding the natural environment, analysis and interpretation of the geo-demographic and political geography in order to understand the contemporary problems of diversity, and the determinant defining elements for establishing the Romanian position in Europe and the world. The positive attitude toward education, knowledge, society, culture, and civilization are some more values and attitudes which will be developed through the 10th -12th grades curricula.

Geography Exams and Competitions

One of the specific characteristics of the Romanian education is an appreciable number of exams in which Geography is involved. First, all students previously had and still have to pass an exam at the end of the compulsory education (Capacity exam). Then, they have to compete for matriculation in a high school or vocational school exam which, presently, is replaced through the use of the middle school grades and middle school graduation results (Law 84/1995, republished: <http://www.edu.ro>, 2003). At the end of high school, Romanian students must pass the high school graduation examination

(Baccalaureate exam) in order to obtain diploma of graduation, which gives them the right to compete for their matriculation in universities.

Middle School Graduation. The Law of Education from 1995, in Article 22, (www.edu.ro/leginv.htm, p. 4), established for the Romanian middle school students a new exam at the end of the 8th grade, called “The Capacity Exam”. The “Capacity” exam is, according to the law, a national exam and it was organized, for the first time in Romanian schools, in 1999 since the Geography of Romania was one compulsory subject for student examinations (Marga, 1999). According to the subsequent modifications of the law, the Geography of Romania became an optional exam, meaning the students had the right to choose between the History of Romanians or the Geography of Romania, both are two hour written examinations (Ministry Order No.4327/2002, annex 2).

As has been emphasized by Marga (1999), the topics for this exam, included Geography too, are proposed by the middle school teachers, then they are selected and finalized by the National Evaluation Service and, finally, reviewed applied for examination in the entire country. The general evaluation criteria have been elaborated on the national level and the exam is organized by the Board of Education of each county in all middle schools, under coordination of the Secretariat of State for the pre-university education of the Romanian Ministry of Education. This exam is considered the first relevant exam of each student’s life, therefore, encouraging the new generation to achieve high performances, thus supporting the point in Romanians rebirth.

Baccalaureate Exam. The high school Geography graduation exam has been and continues to be an important exam in the Romanian students’ life. Before 1999, students had some opportunities in deciding one of the three alternatives for the Geography

examination (Appendix C): Geography of Romania (a three hour essay exam), or Physical-Human / Economical-Environmental Geography (an oral exam), or Geology (an oral exam). From my experience, the majority of students, who decided to take a Geography exam, have chosen the first alternative, an essay exam. They chose it for three reasons: first, it is geography of the country; second, some students need this subject for their matriculation exams at different universities, which requires an essay examination; and, third, in comparison with other subjects of study, geography is perceived as a beautiful, interesting, and more accessible subject of study.

According to the new Romanian Reform of Education' provisions, the high school graduation exam (Baccalaureate exam) continues to include geography as an optional discipline. The Baccalaureate exam is also a national exam, therefore, the examination topics are unique for the entire country. The students can choose either the Geography of Romania or General Geography (with some selected contents from the 10th and 11th grades) and the examination is a written examination, with the length of exam being three hours. The accepted formula comprises two alternatives as follows: (1) Geography of Romania and (2) General Geography, with topics selected from the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades (Ministry Order 4329 / 2002, Annex 2). The structure of the examination is quite different in comparison with the previous exams containing more items: multiple choice, short answers, concepts clarifications, structured essays, and cartographic interpretations. Since geography remains an important exam for matriculation at some colleges and universities, the geography high school graduation exam is and will continue be considered an important step for the students' future and their individual profession.

There are many advocates of these examination procedures, but, at the same time, there are many critics. The fact that the matriculation into a university depends on passing the Baccalaureate exam, but the examinee have to take again an independent matriculation exam, generates many controversial discussions. The critics of this procedure disagree with testing students twice on the same subject. Additionally, they argue the high costs of time and money for the matriculation exams are very serious barriers for students coming from low income families. Currently, geography exams for the students' matriculation into universities are strongly required by the geography departments of the Romanian universities. For a long period of time, the Geography of Romania has been one of the three required exams for matriculation within the Economic Science Institutes/Academies, but later on Geography became an optional examination subject.

Geography also is one of the subjects of study taken into consideration for school competitions, Geography Olympiads, respectively. The general objectives of these competitions are to promote ideas of competition and increase the performance rating in studying Geography. They are organized by the school units and the School Board of Education from each county/municipality of Bucharest, under the coordination of a special department from the Ministry of Education, and are structured on the following phases: school, local (commune, town, sector), county/the municipality of Bucharest, and the national (www.edu.ro/regom3109b.htm, p. 5). The selection of the participants is made by the previous phases' results, except for the school phase, where the participation is in accordance with the students' options or/and the teachers' recommendation. The best results obtained during the national phase of the Geography Olympiads are very well

appreciated and can be taken into consideration as a matriculation exam for the geography departments of Romanian universities. Therefore, these competitions are geared to students with special aptitudes and interests in geography and promotes cultural values and competitive fair-play.

Some Reflections

Before 1999, Geography had a higher percentage of descriptive orientations. The Geography curriculum had a unique character in the country, and it was entirely compulsory. In their activity plans (which are individual), teachers could add and practice some supplementary activities with their students, but all content of the official curriculum had to be developed in class.

The measures initiated in 1997 and continued in 1998 and 1999 aimed to bring about changes in all fields of the Romanian educational system and in the geographic field as well. More specifically, the new Reform of Education brought many qualitative improvements in the planning and the teaching of geography at the pre-university level, but the economic and political realities of Romania will still have an important influence, sometimes in a negative sense, in the implementation of the reform's programs.

Students are evaluated in geography through the essay examination, but teachers are allowed to use their alternative methods such as multiple choice tests. More recently, there is a remarkable tendency, even on the national level, for reconsideration of the evaluation and examination systems, which are applied in geography as well. The Romanian grading system is a scale with grades between 10 and 1 and the passing grades are between 10 and 5. For establishing the average term/semester grades for geography, students must receive at least two grades for one hour of teaching per week and two or

three grades for two hours of teaching per week. The annual grade must be obtained from the average of the terms/semesters' marks (the school year, from September 15th to June 15th, was divided into three terms before 1999 and after 1999 into semesters).

Although before the Democratic Reform of Education in 1999 Romanian education system did not establish the National Geography Standards, the geography curriculum had the specific objectives and additional instructions orienting the teachers' activity. Of course, through the new reform, there has been established valuable performance curricular standards. Comparing with American objectives: the Eighteen National Geography Standards, the Fundamentals Five Themes in Geography, and the Five Geographic Skills (www.nationalgeographic.com/resources; www.ncge.org/publications), I appreciate the teaching of geography in Romanian secondary schools equals and even exceed the American geographic secondary education's requirements.

There are many arguments in the favor of change in the geography field. The most valuable are the National Curriculum, having an Optional Curriculum, the Performance Curricular Standards, and the shift from Physical to Human Geography. Equally important can be considered the development of the specific and general competences for each geographic discipline, the relieving of several chapters with unnecessary theoretical details, and the increase of respect toward human diversity, environment, national and international. Nevertheless geography is an independent subject of study and teachers still have many opportunities to interconnect the geographical and geological elements and phenomena with other disciplines in a global interdependence vision.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the characteristics of the Romanian educational system. It explored the communist educational “inheritance”, the major changes brought by the democratic educational reform, and their implications in the teaching of geography in secondary schools. Three major research questions were generated in my study: (1) what were the main characteristics of the communist educational system in Romania; (2) what new educational reform developed and implemented; and (3) what were the essential features of geography, as a school study subject, under Romanian communist regime and how are democratic reform’s provisions reflected in the teaching of geography in secondary schools. In accordance with the study objectives, Chapter 2 provided a detailed qualitative analysis of print, online, and personal information related to education during the communist era. Chapter 3 provided detailed responses regarding the development and implementation of the democratic reform within the secondary schools. Chapter 4 provided a comparative analysis of Geography in Romanian schools before and after the 1989 Romanian democratic revolution, focusing on the reform’s implications in the teaching of geography in secondary schools. The following is an overview of the most relevant findings and future issues as related to the research questions.

Education in Communist Romania

With respect to the educational structure under the communist rule, unlike other former communist countries in which the communist domination has left more freedom for education, in Romania, the communist dictatorship has used any opportunity to annihilate the educational traditions and progress obtained specifically during the interwar period. Unfortunately, the entire educational structure, without any difference, (i.e., pre-university and university education; Romanian and minorities' schools) was, between 1945 and 1989, totally subordinated to a centralized regime with very hard school politics. Even the OECD Report (2000, p. 71), analyzing the current national politics in the educational field, emphasized that "Romania has survived to one of the most severe dictatorial regime from the region" with extreme negative repercussions toward education. The most unfavorable consequence for Romanian education and research has been the country's isolation by the European and international community with dramatic effects toward modernization of both compartments and free circulation of information.

Following the end of World War II, (1945 – 1989), Romania has had to cope with new political influences, along with an elaborated new legislation which, unfortunately, oriented the traditional education system to the soviet model. School legislation sections have attempted to characterize and explain the complexity of change in the Romanian educational system's structure as a result of elaboration and implementation of some important educational reforms.

Education provided in the minorities' mother tongues has long traditions in Romania, especially for central and western Romania, inhabited by the most

representative minorities (Figure 3.1). Due to political conditions before 1989, following a policy of forced assimilation concerning minorities, education in the mother tongues of the ethnic minority groups was ignored or knew a regress that led to the disappearance of many schools and/or sections with tuition in the minorities tongues. But contrary to the general politics of rejection and annihilation of minorities' cultural and educational traditions, it can be found that during the 1950s even opposite measures in which a certain minority, Hungarian, for example, obtained the territorial autonomy in Transylvania (e.g., the Mures – Magyar Autonomous Region) with recognized freedom in using their mother tongue in education.

Funding educational system requires particular attention. Educational spending in communist Romania has been low by international comparison and the central government was the source of most funding. With 2.2 % of GNP during 1985-1987, Romania even in comparison with some former communist countries still registered a very low level of its expenditure in public education (World Bank, 2001; UNDP, 2001). Fortunately, despite the communist constraints, through the people's strong motivation to attend school, on the one hand, and teachers' devotion, on the other hand, Romanian education not only survived from a terrible police regime but also preserved certain values which were attached to education and transmitted them to the present generation.

Democratic Reform of Education

After a slow and difficult start, between 1990 and 1995, there was evidence that changes in Romanian education were reaching the classroom through new curricula, alternative textbooks, and many other liberal measures. The elaboration and introduction of a coherent National Curriculum Framework (1998) was a major step toward the

educational reform's needs. Continued in 1999 and then next for years as a reform of contents, the reform of education assimilates the reform of the system allowing for the acceleration of change. New general educational politics, changing the character of education, literacy development efforts, including geographic literacy, a refreshed impetus of scientific research in universities, spontaneous development of private education, the development of information technology in education, improvement in infrastructure, the reform of pre-academic and university management, international cooperation, and increasing the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education are the most important major steps in Romanian educational reform process.

After 1989, it is remarkable that the Romanian government's relative high efforts to raise public education expenditure, to connect its educational systems with different modern educational systems from Western Europe or countries overseas, and to develop several new educational projects. The involvement of the World Bank, UE-PHARE, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations, through their financial assistance is crucial for the new reform program in education at all levels. Also, the technical assistance and the specialization courses for Romanians held in Romania and different foreign countries through special projects with external financing have strengthened the educational domain.

As a result of a certain level of public education expenditure, it is expected that the school results will show improvement accordingly. Romania and many countries confirm this expectancy, but there are some exceptions as well. According to the Third International Maths and Science Study, TIMSS, (Table 5.1), the biggest piece of international research on educational standards, Romania is classified in the 34th position

Table 5.1

THIRD INTERNATIONAL MATHS AND SCIENCE STUDY
1995

13-YEAR-OLDS' AVERAGE SCORE
(International Average = 500)

MATHS

SCIENCE

1. Singapore	643	1. Singapore	607
2. South Korea	607	2. Czech Rep.	574
3. Japan	605	3. Japan	571
4. Hong Kong	588	4. South Korea	565
5. Belgium (Flanders)	565	5. Bulgaria	565
6. Czech Rep.	564	6. Netherlands	560
7. Slovakia	547	7. Slovenia	560
8. Switzerland	545	8. Austria	558
9. Netherlands	541	9. Hungary	554
10. Slovenia	541	10. England	552
11. Bulgaria	540	11. Belgium (F)	550
12. Austria	539	12. Australia	545
13. France	538	13. Slovakia	544
14. Hungary	537	14. Russia	538
15. RUSSIA	535	15. Ireland	538
16. Australia	530	16. Sweden	535
17. Ireland	527	17. USA	534
18. Canada	527	18. Canada	531
19. Belgium (Wallonia)	526	19. Germany	531
20. Thailand	522	20. Norway	527
21. Israel	522	21. Thailand	525
22. Sweden	519	22. New Zealand	525
23. Germany	509	23. Israel	524
24. New Zealand	508	24. Hong Kong	522
25. England	506	25. Switzerland	522
26. Norway	503	26. Scotland	517
27. Denmark	502	27. Spain	517
28. USA	500	28. France	498
29. Scotland	498	29. Greece	497
30. Latvia	493	30. Iceland	494
31. Spain	487	31. Romania	486
32. Iceland	487	32. Latvia	485
33. Greece	484	33. Portugal	480
34. Romania	482	34. Denmark	478
35. Lithuania	477	35. Lithuania	476
36. Cyprus	474	36. Belgium (W)	471
37. Portugal	454	37. Iran	470
38. Iran	428	38. Cyprus	463
39. Kuwait	392	39. Kuwait	430
40. Colombia	385	40. Colombia	411
41. South Africa	354	41. South Africa	326

Source: The Economist, 1997

in Mathematics and 31st in Science, from 41 tested countries, not very far from the United States position in Mathematics, a country which spends significantly more per student for education.

But contrary to these survey's results, Romanian students after 1989 obtained excellent results at several international competitions. Through aligning Romanian education with European and global education, many Romanian students already have been noticed at international competitions as having high intellectual potential (<http://www.edu.ro/>, 2001, 2002), and are excellent ambassadors of Romanian education. In 2001, for instance, Romania obtained the gold medal for the first place at the International Mathematics Olympiads, held in Washington, D. C., at the high school level of the 12th grade (Table 5.2). At the same time, the results of the 2001 and 2002 international school Olympiads and other international school competitions, at the European level for example, were for Romanian middle and high school students pointed out a significant record in spite of a low level of Romanian government expenditure in public education (3.6 % of GNP / 1995-1997).

When a country is engaged in a continuous economic crisis, such exceptional school performances can be achieved only by very hard work and devotion of both students and teachers. According to my experience, for many Romanian students, obtaining excellent school results is the only way to escape from poverty and change their social status. In addition, it is remarkable a strong support and desire from the students' families to succeed.

Although there is a certain correlation between economic development and the educational system, there appears to be little evidence to support the argument that the

Table 5.2

NUMBER OF ROMANIAN STUDENTS
WINNING AWARDS AT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL COMPETITIONS
2001 - 2002

SUBJECT	SCHOOL COMPETITION (Year)	1st PLACE	2nd PLACE	3rd PLACE	4th PLACE
Mathematics	International Olympiad (I.O.) 2001	1	2	2.	1
	Balkan Olympiad / Seniors 2001	4	2	-	-
	Balkan Olympiad / Juniors 2001	2	4	-	-
	Tuymaada/01	1	1	-	-
	Balkan 2002 Olymp./Sen.	1	3	2	-
	Balkan 2002 Olymp./Jun.	5	1	-	-
Physics	I.O. 2001	-	-	2	1
	Tuymaada 2001	-	-	2	-
Chemistry	I.O. 2001	-	3	1	-
	Tuymaada/01	2	-	-	-
Biology	I.O. 2001	-	2	-	-
Philosophy	I.O. 2001	-	-	-	2
Russian	I.O. Modern 2001	9	1	1	-
	I.O. Nat./01	2	-	4	-
Informatics	Tuymaada/01	1	1	-	-
	Balkan 2002 Olymp./Sen.	1	-	1	-
	Central Europe 2002 Olympiad	2	-	-	-

Source: Adapted from Romanian Ministry of Education, <http://www.edu.ro/>, 2001, 2002

main cause of educational under-achievement is under-funding. In spite of this argument, raising the educational expenditure continues to be an important governmental objective in Romania. Of course, money will not resolve all the educational system's problems, but the lack of funding will aggravate the already existent problems

After December 1989, several major changes took place in Romanian education, and many measures taken in the educational field by the communist regime were repaired. As a result, according to the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research (2001), education was the first major field that had passed the "examination" in Brussels at the negotiations of Romania to join the European Union.

Geography in Secondary Education

In order to address the third research question, the study focused on several qualitative improvements in geography curriculum, teaching methods, student evaluations in Romanian secondary schools, as well as the elaboration of the performance curricular standards in geography. The comparison between the old and new geography curricula showed evidence of a shift from a traditional geography to a modern geography that encapsulated the ideals of reform.

The new structure of the geography curriculum includes not only the educational contents for every geography level, which are upgraded, but also the framework objectives, reference objectives, and valuable examples of learning activities. The educational contents of the compulsory curriculum-nucleus (geography core curriculum) did not register dramatic changes because each geography branch has a specific spectrum of topics which must be taught. However there was a new arrangement of topics in the

middle grades, an elimination of unnecessary and outdated details, and an introduction of lessons with a link to some practical activities, interdisciplinary studies, and global issues.

Complementing the core was an optional geography curriculum which included a large spectrum of subjects. These electives were designed to allow students greater flexibility in tailoring their study to the job market, consistent with the reform's objectives to bring Romania into the global market. The optional geography curriculum also contributed to the goal of decentralization of the educational system because each school could choose the optional curriculum it wishes to offer to its students. Subjects included as geography electives tended to have a significant bias toward applied geography and interdisciplinary studies, another marker of the modernization of the geography contents as a result of the reform's implementation.

These changes automatically required the equipping of schools with new technological supplies, the modernization of teaching methods and teacher training, and the introduction of the standardized tests in student's evaluation. Although many schools have already adjusted their approaches to the new requirements, there still exists schools, particularly in rural areas, which are not able to attain the new educational standards. Further, not all Romanian schools have computer labs and many teachers still are not prepared to operate specialized geography software. The fact that my former students, who graduated in 2002 in Geography at the University of Bucharest, did not study Geographic Information Science reinforces the idea that Romanian education still needs time and financial support to supply schools with the necessary technology in order to develop a system of world-class schools.

The new educational framework plans for secondary school levels show the inclusion of geography in a curricular area called “Man and Society” (Table 3.2). This categorization reflects a stronger emphasis on Human Geography in the new curriculum in comparison with the previous geography curriculum. The preponderance of Human Geography topics was extended significantly but, at the same time, Physical Geography continues to be very strong within the new geography curriculum. Thus, geography is perceived both a Social Science and an Earth Science and is scheduled as an independent subject of study.

Emerging Issues

Despite the already registered progress, in the context of ongoing national educational reform, Romanian schools still are confronted with some major issues and, consequently, need help. According to the Center Education 2000+'s Preliminary Final Report (2002), approximately 5 % of graduates of the compulsory education do not continue on to high school education and dropout or non-attendance are also considered major issues. General enrollments are declining as a result of the population decline. Teacher salaries are low and continues to fall in real terms because their annual salary increase cannot keep pace with inflation. In rural areas, especially, there is still a significant number of unqualified teachers. No formal qualification is provided for head teachers or educational administrators. Also, there are no clear regulations concerning those schools promoting alternative pedagogy. In-service teacher training, childhood education, the improvement of educational programs in communities with gypsy (Romma) population, environmental and civics education should have equal importance for solving future issues.

According to Center Education 2000+ (2002), the Center, World Bank, Ministry of Education, European Commission, PHARE, and a number of bilateral donors are already partners of structural reform in Romanian education. All are hoping this collaboration will lead to co-funding and coordination in the future implementation process. The implementation of the Education Development Program, called Education 2000+, has determined the acceleration of the reform process as well.

Despite all conditions mentioned above, the educational system in Romania delivers an impressive public service. It maintains a well-developed structure for delivering education, develops a decentralized educational management, and shares many of the positive characteristics of education in developed countries. It has high participation rates, low repetition rates in basic education, and strong teacher based training. Structural and even systemic changes are now under way which will improve the quality of teaching, learning, and the education structure in Romania (Butuca et al, 2001).

The evaluation of the Romanian educational policy underwent significant changes since 1998. According to Romanian Ministry of Education (<http://www.edu.ro/reform99.htm>), the 1998 European Commission's Report on Romania's Progress toward accession to the European Union asserts that "the Ministry of National Education has taken major steps towards institutional and legislative reforms." Later, the 2000 OECD Report (www.edu.ro/analise.htm, p.71) pointed out that despite different levels of income and political history, the educational system in Romania "brings an impressive contributions in public service and is engaged in profound changes predestined to improve the quality of learning-teaching process, as well as educational management."

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

GEOGRAPHY IN ROMANIAN SCHOOLS

HIGH SCHOOL SYLLABUSES: 9th and 10th grades

(Before 1999)

GENERAL PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY – 9th grade

1h/week = 34h/year: scientific (real) profiles

2h/week = 68h/year: humanistic profiles

Hours' Schedule: Teaching-Learning-Evaluation = 30/60 hours

Applied Lessons = 2 / 4 hours

Recapitulation = 2 / 4 hours

Chapters:

- Mathematical Geography: the Earth-a Cosmic Body (3/6h)
- Notions of Cartography (2/4h)
- Geology and Geomorphology (11/22h): Lithosphere's Dynamics (6/12h)
The Earth Surface's Relief (5/10h)
- Notions of Meteorology-Climatology (5/10h)
- Oceanography-Hydrology: the Planetary Ocean and Continental Water Bodies (4/8h)
- Biogeography: Vegetation and Fauna (3/6h)
- Soil Geography (2/4h)

WORLD HUMAN AND ECONOMICAL GEOGRAPHY – 10th grade

1h/week = 34h/year (all profiles)

Hours' Schedule: Teaching-Learning-Evaluation = 32 hours

Recapitulation = 2 hours

Total = 34 hours

Chapters:

- Political Geography: Political Map of the Contemporary World (2h)
- Human Geography (6h): World Population (3h)
Human Settlements (3h)
- World Economical Geography (24h): Natural Resources (5h)
Agriculture (7h)
Industry (7h)
Transportations (3h)
Tourism (1h)
International Economical Relations (1h)

Source: Translated by author from Romanian High School Geography Syllabuses,
1998-1999

Appendix B

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY IN ROMANIAN SCHOOLS

HIGH SCHOOL SYLLABUSES: 11th grade

(Before 1999)

ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY

1h/week = 34h/year

Hours' Schedule: Teaching-Learning-Evaluation = 32 hours

Recapitulation = 2 hours

Chapters:

- Theoretical Problems (12h)
- Relationships between the Environment's Components (2h)
- Types of the Geographical Landscapes (3h)
- The Influence of Human Activities toward the Environment (2h)
- Priority Domains of the Environmental Protection and Conservation (9h)

GEOLOGY

1h/week = 34h/year

Hours' Schedule: Teaching-Learning-Evaluation = 26 hours

Lab and Field Trips = 5 hours

Recapitulation = 3 hours

Chapters:

- Introduction: Geology's Subject Matter and Its Domains (1h)
- Notions of the Earth's Physics (1h)
- Mineralogy (4h)
- Paleontology (4h)
- Petrology (4h)
- Structural and Geotectonic Geology (3h)
- Stratigraphy and Historical Geology (8h)
- Geological Patrimony's Protection in Romania (1h)

Source: Translated by author from Romanian High School Geography Syllabuses,
1998-1999

Appendix C

GEOGRAPHY IN ROMANIAN SCHOOLS

HIGH SCHOOL SYLLABUS and BACCALAUREATE EXAM: 12th grade

(Before 1999)

GEOGRAPHY OF ROMANIA

1h/week = 34h/year: scientific (real) profiles

2h/week = 68h/year: humanistic profiles

Hours' Schedule: Teaching-Learning-Evaluation = 32/64 hours

Recapitulation = 2 / 4 hours

Chapters:

- The Unity and Harmony of the Romanian Territory (2/4h)
- Natural Frame (11/22h)
- Population and Settlements (3/6h)
- Romanian Economy (15/30): Agriculture and Industrial Processing of the Agricultural Products (5/10h)
Industry (6/12h)
Transportations and the Ways of Communication (2/4h)
Tourism (1/2h)
Trade and Economic Relations of Romania (1/2h)
- Regional Characteristics of the Romanian Territory (1/2h)

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION (The Baccalaureate Exam)

- Geography of Romania (Essay Exam/3h)
OR
- Physical Geography; Human-Economical Geography-Environmental Geography
(Oral Exam)
OR
- Geology (Oral Exam)

Source: Translated by author from Romanian High School Geography Syllabuses,
1998-1999; Personal Experience