ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	EDUCATION AMIDST TRANSITION: THE CASE OF ROMANIA
	F. Tony Di Giacomo, PhD, 2010
Directed by:	Professor Jing Lin, EDHI

After enduring centuries of colonialism, followed recently by the exogenous forces of globalization and isomorphism, Romania and other countries in Eastern Europe have had unique opportunities amidst formidable challenges since they began their transitions toward democracy. In this case study, I explore these forces and resulting challenges that influenced the Romanian education system between 1989 and 2007. With this approach, I try to elucidate the difficulties endured by the Romanian political and education elite when transitioning the country from totalitarianism toward democracy. I conducted an extensive literature review and document analysis, coupled with in-depth interviews with the Romanian bureaucratic education elite who influenced the country's education reforms. My research investigated the complicated manner in which education plays a role in supporting a country in transition.

Two central questions drove my research:

(1)   What factors impacted Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?

(2)   What role did education play in Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?

My findings suggest that too many poorly constructed short-term focused reforms, developed by an elite deeply entrenched in its communist past, slowed significantly the development of a democratic education system in Romania. Exogenous forces such as colonialism, globalization and isomorphism further compounded the challenges of Romania's political transition. The elements of these findings, in addition to domestic factors such as Romania's history and culture, coupled with its nascent political system and colonized mentality, partially explain the reasons for the core of the education system remaining largely status quo.

EDUCATION AMIDST TRANSITION: THE CASE OF ROMANIA

By

Francis Anthony Di Giacomo

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2010

Advisory Committee

Professor Jing Lin, Chair

Dr. Caroline Eick

Professor Mark Ginsburg

Professor James Greenberg

Professor Steven Klees

Dedication

This study is dedicated to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the peaceful leadership she demonstrates in her native Burma. I hope her bravery and character serve to inspire all democracies, transitional and developing, and the citizens who are fortunate to have them.

Acknowledgements

A dissertation is known as an arduous and sometimes lonely undertaking, as years of solitude in libraries or in front of a computer screen can leave one feeling isolated. I wish to express my gratitude and love for all those family and friends who provided emotional, intellectual and spiritual support throughout my studies and writing process.

To my wife, Anca, for allowing our home and lives to benefit from sacrifice, and for exhibiting endless patience and love.

To my family, both American and Romanian, for their support and interest in my study—to my father Frank for sparking my curiosity about the world, and to my mother Mary Clare for juggling more than gravity would allow two hands.

To Mihai Meiu, a doctor of medicine, expert coordinator and consigliere who provided cultural and transportation navigation, patience, translation, and above all, the support to make this study possible.

To Petre Lazarescu, another doctor of medicine, who housed, fed and showed me around Bucharest literally and metaphorically; for making calls on my behalf; and for maintaining your faith in the beauty of Romania.

To my grandmother, Dorothy Evans, for showing me the power of what education can accomplish.

To my advisor, Dr. Jing Lin, I am particularly thankful to you for helping refine my character and skills, enhance my compassion, deepen my spirituality and hopefully become more effective as a positive force in this world.

To my doctoral committee, I wish to express my thanks for your time and guidance whether over the phone, over coffee, or in class for your unique perspectives,

experience and interest in my study—and for providing me with the counsel to ensure its success.

   To the interviewees, while you are unnamed in this study, your openness toward me and passion and love for your country were duly noticed and appreciated. Your contribution provides, with this study, another support mechanism for Romania, other transitional democracies and future democracies with important lessons.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Act 84: Education Law of 1995 in Romania

EU: European Union

IMF: International Monetary Fund

UN: United Nations

U.S.: United States of America

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WB: World Bank

CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this introductory section is to provide the overview, focus, purpose, research questions, framework of analysis and potential significance of my case study. This study investigates the major trends, forces and phenomena that affected education and culture in transitional Romania between 1989 and 2007. This study explores also the nature of education as an institution with the potential to play a role in nation-building, social reproduction, cultivation of character, teaching of democracy and instilling of culture. However, in post- coup d'état Romania, the role of education was minimal as a component of transition due to competing forces that undermined education's potential role, which may have contributed to disjointed, ineffective and ill-timed policies and laws. For comprehension and clarity, this study will elucidate these forces and highlight why and how they influenced education with a discussion of the potential consequences based on evaluated literature and original interviews conducted with elite bureaucrats in Romania.

In this chapter, I lay the groundwork upon which I construct my analysis of Romania's transition within the context of many historical and contemporary challenges. Whereas many studies about democratic transition focus on the quality of the democracy or the process itself from a political perspective, I spotlight education when considering the transition, which provides a unique lens to view democratization and a country's transition from one system toward another. Through this lens, and by providing a new

perspective, I try to then uncover a number of possible directions to consider for Romania as well as other future transitional democracies. Moreover, even non-transitional democracies can benefit from revisiting their respective developments.

Relationship to Topic

My relationship to this topic was initially based on my Eastern European ancestry. This relationship was later strengthened by my interest in democratization, development and the integral role of education in both constructs. I hope my study elucidates for leaders in nascent, future and established democracies the importance of thinking and acting with a long-term perspective with regards to education as a component of national political development and democratic transition. Therefore, my relationship to the study is both personal and ideological, the combination of which irrevocably connects me to the outcome of this work.

Focus

The focus of my study was guided by the following questions:

(1) What factors impacted Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?

(2) What role did education play in Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?

These questions remain unanswered in the literature in terms of exploring the causes behind Romania's transition in relation to changes in public and private education, and how the transition may have differed from other countries in Eastern Europe. For

example, the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, along with Czech Republic,

Poland and Slovenia all liberalized their economies and moved quickly toward a

democratic government and democratic society. Meanwhile, countries like Romania and

Bulgaria were slower to transition: their Perestroika approach to reform involved a very

slow, calculated shift from a closed and controlled government toward an open and

democratic government, despite the passage of many reforms and policies. Moreover, the

role of education is not adequately explored in the literature and possibly insignificant in

supporting the transition. The question of whether education was a critical factor in a

country's transition toward democracy was not clearly delineated, nor was the issue of

whether transitions were slowed by the failure to use education as an agent of rapid

change.

Unlike some other countries in Eastern Europe, which capitalized on the

opportunity to fundamentally remove the obstacles standing in the way of democratic

reform and stability, such as instituting democratic education and capitalist theory in the

classroom, Romanian elite did not take advantage of this opportunity. These elite or

bureaucrats, *defined in this study as those in the field of education who held or now hold*

a position of influence during and possibly before the transition, had the authority and

power to shape the outcomes of the reform. For example, Romania did not furnish its

Constitution of 1991 with regulations for government, business and education that were

necessary to navigate through the transition away from totalitarianism. Although this

Constitution allowed for the provision of private or non-secular education for the first

time in almost fifty years, the government did not supplement the Constitution with a

long-term plan for these schools with regard to accreditation, funding, curriculum,

democratic education or pedagogy. Four years later, when Education Act 84 was passed in 1995, also known as the Education Law of 1995, it provided guidance for the Romanian education system and addressed the vague nature of the Constitution as it relates to education—which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Concurrent with Education Act 84 in 1995, the Romanian government applied to gain entry into the European Union (EU), a decision that promised to link Romania to more established democracies in Western Europe which would possibly support its transition. The EU application also indicated the Romanian government's alleged willingness to adhere to non-domestic decision-making, as in the case of the education assimilation law for the EU known as the Bologna Accords or Bologna Process.

For an elite like Romania's who were ill-trained and unprepared for their newfound democracy, the Accords unfortunately did not clarify how the government would specifically direct and administer its major domestic systems (such as education). While other Eastern European countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic also sought EU accession early in their transitions, the key difference lies with the elite who were charged with, or took charge of, the duty to lead their respective countries toward a long-term goal: a stable democracy with a free-market economy buttressed by a democratic education system. As a result, unlike the elite in Poland and the Czech Republic who ascended to power *after* regime change, the Romanian elite from the communist regime remained in charge of the government, and through an approach approximating authoritarianism, led the country's democratic transition. In my research, I try to better understand how the lack of alternative elite, defined as those to which a new

government can turn to for experienced or competent leadership for the new type of

government,[1] may have had an effect on the pace and substance of Romania's transition.

Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to explore the impact of political transition on

state-sponsored and private education, as well as to study education's role within a state's

transition, by focusing on Romania as a case study within the context of Eastern Europe.

Particular attention was given to the role of the educational elite—or bureaucrats, those

with an ability to impact Romanian education on a national scale through positions such

as within the Ministry of Education—on the transition from totalitarianism toward

democracy, a period extending from the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent coup in

December 1989 to EU accession on January 1, 2007. To explore factors affecting

Romania's transition, as well as the role of actors who had opportunities to change the

course of their countries, my literature review focused on colonialism, globalization and

isomorphism as emerging concepts that help explain the forces that have influenced and

are still influencing Romanian education.

Before conducting my literature review and original research, I was uncertain

which specific factors have impacted the transition, and whether or to what extent

education played a role in this transition. Therefore, I sought to discover details about

Romanian education during the transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy

---

[1] An example of alternative elite in the Czech Republic, for example, is Václav Havel or in Poland, Tadeusz Mazowiecki as both were non-communists who possessed the ability to lead in a democratic government—both were the first democratic leaders in their respective countries.

while considering the significant impact of exogenous forces and the role of elite education leadership. To conduct this research, I examined both foreign and domestic forces in analyzing Romania's education system during its transitional period between 1989 and 2007. By focusing on Romania, I am highlighting a country not often studied to explore the perspective of its elite education officials and role of education in its transition. Through this research, I hoped to better understand the challenges related to transitioning a country toward a democracy and a free-market economy, particularly in a country that lacked an alternative elite. To address this phenomenon, the research had to uncover how democratization is often considered sequential and one-size-fits-all in the literature, i.e., the old regime gives way to a series of pre-conceived, methodical steps possibly without regard for adequately considering the impact of culture, history or geopolitical issues. In addition, a key observation I sought to illuminate is how education is not always utilized as a major component when considering policy prescriptions to assist transitional democracies. Instead, security and economic needs take priority when transitioning; therefore, it seems to me that by not addressing the education system, countries may experience long-term challenges related to the creation of a stable democratic government that may eventually supersede security and commerce.

To better understand the power of the three main exogenous forces that impacted the Romanian elite and how they affected education, without discounting other endogenous factors that will be discussed subsequently, I reviewed literature and conducted interviews with education bureaucrats. I also provided a broader understanding of Romania's education history as well as the more recent status of its school systems from primary through tertiary education through the perspective of the interviewees. To

broaden the depth and breadth of this study, I referred to Romania's Eastern European neighbors for some comparison, but the focus of this study is on Romania itself. In Chapter III, I will discuss my qualitative research methodology in great detail, followed by macro-level findings in Chapter IV and micro-level findings in Chapter V from my original interviews conducted in Romania, which were triangulated with my literature review where possible. Following these findings, I will provide theoretical and practical reflections in Chapter VI followed by my conclusion and possible directions to consider in Chapter VII.

Framework of Analysis

By employing a qualitative and exploratory case study methodology, I hoped to gather the data necessary to adequately discuss Romania as a transitional country. This case study methodology ensured that the parameters and focus of this study were limited to the events that took place between December 1989 and January 1, 2007. Within the context of this case study, I conducted an extensive literature review; in an effort to fill any gaps in the literature, I interviewed Romanian elite who were part of or are still part of the transitional government. The purpose of these interviews was to highlight what has happened, in terms of new policies and laws, and their impact on education. The interviews provide first hand information, or "voice" from the field, which can enhance our understanding on the role of education in a country's transition from one political system to another. By evaluating colonialism and its effects on the region, globalization and its effect on culture, the EU and its isomorphic tendencies, and lastly, Romanian

education policies, I hope to convey a clearer understanding of the challenges and obstacles Romania faced while transitioning.

As previously mentioned, the major concepts that guide this framework are colonialism, globalization and isomorphism in the context of democratization and decentralization. I will frame these concepts around the geographic locations of Romania and more broadly, Eastern Europe, and this contextualized understanding will provide a backdrop to examine the perspective of the elite in Romania who had to deal with exogenous forces and the legacy of history in real time. Hence, instead of focusing on solely domestic factors as some studies have explored, this study will incorporate the exogenous factors that combined with the domestic forces to impact Romania's transition.

Potential Significance

My study has the potential to improve the understanding of some of the challenges and resulting decisions faced by the Romanian elite during the transition from a totalitarian government toward democracy. This understanding can expose the way in which countries transition when they lack an alternative elite[2] following a political revolution or coup. Moreover, this study addresses the impact of exogenous forces coupled with domestic challenges, and especially the role of education, which is usually treated as a lower priority in the triage of development, which focuses on the economy and political system first. By listening to the voices of the elite, this study hopes to

---

[2] Leadership who were not part of the regime from which a country transitioned and who possess the ability and experience to lead within the framework of a new form of government, such as democracy.

examine the success or failure of education in propelling countries beyond short-term

planning and ensuring continued progress in the intended direction.

CHAPTER II: PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW:

MACRO, EMERGING CONCEPTS AND PHENOMENA

Introduction

To provide a firm foundation for this case study, the following literature review explores the three emerging concepts I have determined to be essential in understanding the challenges of education reform within transitional democracies: colonialism, globalization and isomorphism. These exogenous forces have had a deep and profound impact on the endogenous operational abilities within countries that are former colonies. For example, when transitioning from a Soviet-style education system that focused on "banking," or a focus on rote memory and retention without analysis, toward a democratic education that valued creative and critical thinking, Romania went from modeling one external entity (the Soviet Union) to another (the EU), while struggling to retain its own cultural context. Therefore, exploration of domestic issues necessitates the exploration of these non-domestic, exogenous forces in the context of democratic transition.

The theoretical underpinning that helps explain these forces with which elite contended directly connects to their role in making decisions which affect Romania's democratic transition, and educational reform, in particular. In the following sections, I will define Romania's geographic region, followed by a review of democracy and democratization for the purpose of contextualizing the three emerging forces. This exploration will assist in better understanding Romania's context for education reform

between 1989 and 2007. Before discussing these topics in great detail, however, I will first provide a brief historical overview to contextualize my case study.

Defining Eastern Europe

While every country experiences a unique historical and developmental trajectory, trends and commonalities can be discovered on the regional geographic level, as well the thematic and conceptual level. This section will explore an overview of the regional context for Romania to better understand the environment in which Romania transitioned. Understanding this region also begins with analyzing the symbolism of the Berlin Wall and its history as it physically divided this region: this wall symbolized a divided Germany and a separated Europe. Although the wall physically divided West Berlin from East Berlin, it was known as the Iron Curtain because it symbolized a separation between Western democracy and capitalism and Soviet-style communism, which was characterized as an impermeable political system. The concept of division dates back to Emperor Diocletus around 311 A.D., who made a decision to simplify the management of the Roman Empire by dividing Eastern Europe from Western Europe. Thus, the creation of the Berlin Wall provided a physical barrier that embodied a political arrangement begun by Diocletus' decision two thousand years prior; this division was later solidified by Russian occupation, resulting in the further isolation of Eastern Europe.

Modern day Eastern Europe consists of the following countries: Poland, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova. With Poland, Czech Republic and Slovenia comprising the western border of

Eastern Europe, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia comprise the northern portion often called

Baltic States. The Black Sea borders of Romania and Bulgaria represent the natural water

boundary of Eastern Europe, with the remaining countries comprising the Southern

border. Because each of these countries approximate the land mass of a medium-sized

U.S. state, Eastern Europe makes up a significant portion of the European landmass.

Particular characteristics of the Balkan Region within Eastern Europe will be discussed in

a subsequent chapter. After defining the geographic area of Eastern Europe and its

symbolic geographic isolation, I will now turn to exploring Romania, specifically.

Modern Romania

Romania serves as an example of one country within a connected but varied

grouping of nations that share many common historical features. To contextualize

Romania, I will also explore key characteristics of the country and its people in order

to better understand contemporary, post-coup Romanian education. According to the

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Romania

covers 237, 500 sq. km and has a population of 22.7 million people.

In 1992, 45.5% of the population was under 30 years of age. More than half of

all Romanians (54%) live in cities. Nearly 90% of the population speaks

Romanian, the national language and the language of instruction in 96% of

schools. Several linguistic minorities also exist in Romania, including

Hungarian, German, and Roma (1.8%) (http://www.oecd.org).

As one of the largest countries in Europe (approximating the size of Oregon),

Romania was also one of the most centralized in all aspects of public life during its

communist period, which began after World War II and continued through December 1989. Following on from an approximate 50-year monarchy before WWII and brief fascist government after WWII, the Romanian government became totalitarian under Ceauşescu very early in Romania's communist era; therefore, the words communism and totalitarianism (in research literature and Romanian parlance today) are often used interchangeably—a concept I will explore thoroughly in subsequent sections. The totalitarian regime was particularly inefficient and negative when addressing the needs of the Roma population, an ethnic minority who lacked political clout during communism. A second group of ethnic minorities, Hungarians, inhabited the northwest of Romania following a border change in 1945. Although one-dimensional with respect to ethnicity, Romania had to contend with two key minority populations within its borders as it addressed political and education reforms during the transition. To better understand transition, I will now provide an overview of democracy, democratization and transition itself.

Government: Democratization

For the purposes of this study, democracy is defined as a political system whereby the populace controls government through representatives who are elected and who work within varying degrees of centralized or decentralized governments, depending on the country and its needs (Carothers, 1999). The population may also participate in non-governmental organizations through publicly beneficial activities such as volunteering. Therefore, the population of a democracy has a stake in the outcomes of decisions made by their government.

Although multiple versions of democratic governments currently exist throughout the world ranging from pluralist to strong, most forms exhibit the following components: an electoral process with national political parties and free elections, state institutions with a constitution, effective and transparent judiciary, representatives and a pro-democratic military; and, finally, a civil society with active, non-governmental organizations, politically educated citizenry, a strong and independent media and strong independent unions (Carothers, 1999). Political scientists Rose et al. (1998) consider a country to be a democracy if it comprises the following qualities: "it governs by the rule of law; institutions of civil society are active and independent of the state; there are free and fair elections; and governors are accountable to the electorate (p. 36). Therefore, commonality exists among the definitions of democracy, and potentially differs in the implementation of these definitions as well as the degree to which each characteristic manifests in the given country.

Democratization, then, is the process by which a country changes from its status as a communist, authoritarian or totalitarian form of government toward a democracy, usually following an "abrupt change in regime due to war, internal change or the collapse of an external power" (Rose et al., 1998, p. 21). Moreover, "whereas a regime can collapse overnight, democratization is a process that requires time" (p. 45). Therefore, rushing to implement too many changes may cause instability, but too slow of a process may spark insurrection.

During democratization, the country's focus is on transformation. According to political theorist Ian Bremmer (2006), all transitional democracies follow what he calls a "J curve" progression with varying degrees of horizontal or vertical movement. For

example, as a government opens and increases transparency, it exposes itself to potential

destabilization. The following figure demonstrates this progression:

Figure 1: The J Curve
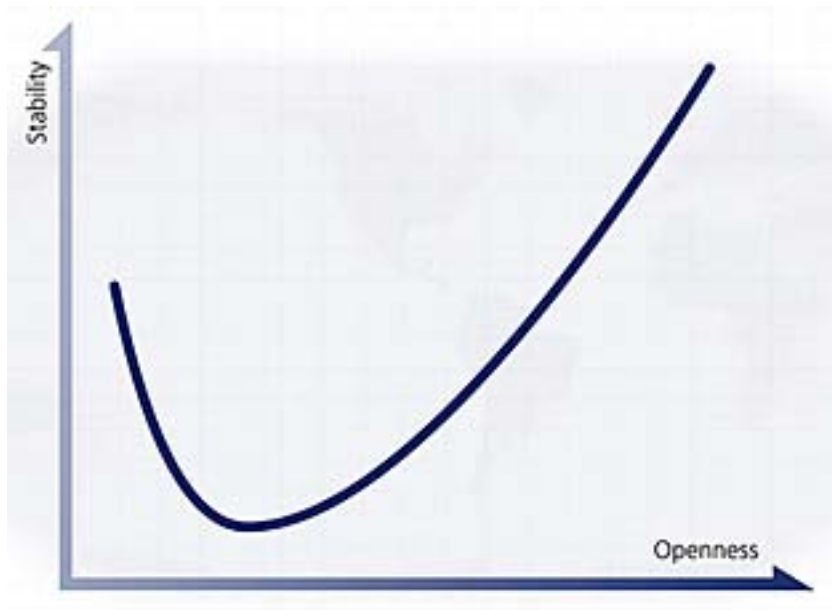
With the assumption that Bremmer's theory of transition is applicable to most or all

democracies, one main challenge for each respective country is to determine the pace at

which it progresses along the curve from authoritative stability toward a more open

democracy that supports greater equality for its citizens *and* stability. Another challenge

is to determine to what extent transition is needed and what type of democracy is

desirable to follow as a model. Hence, this quantitative curve is an approximation and a

guide to illustrate various progression levels of democratic transition, but there are a few

shortcomings to this 2-dimensional perspective that will later be explored.

Democratization: Rapid or Moderate Pace

As the J curve shows, the pace or progression of democratization may differ depending on the country in question. For example, the northern and western region of Eastern Europe democratized quickly. The Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania all had various forms of revolution, some violent, others peaceful, but all removed most or all former communists from power and transitioned at a relatively rapid pace (Bremmer, 2006). Shortly after these countries' revolutions, elected representatives ushered in swift political and economic reforms, followed by education reforms once the countries had stabilized. Complete changes of the political elite as well as political and economic systems demonstrated rapid reformation and economic growth without a significant loss in stability. Besides the fact that these countries possessed an alternative elite to the communists who had the capacity to lead in a transitional democracy, an additional key element for these countries' rapid substantive transition was the existence of a solidarity movement (Kapstein and Mandelbaum, 1997). In Poland, for example, the combination of high public expectations and popular consensus behind the transitional leadership forged a unified leadership and citizenry. In addition, Poland, like Czech Republic and to an extent Hungary, maintained life-expectancy and infant mortality rates[3] similar to western countries and invested heavily in education and health care following the transitions (Kapstein and Mandelbaum, 1997).

As briefly mentioned, Hungary represents a country which experienced a moderate pace of transition with mixed results. Hungary's revolution was rapid but

---

[3] These two indicators are indicators used here as proxies to represent the quality of life in a country.

modest in scope, leaving many communist political elite in power while changing many government structures (Carothers, 1999). Not surprisingly, its location in the center of Eastern Europe could have played a part in its rapid reform pace and modest scope due to its proximity to both western and eastern influences, and representing a "political average" of the two regions. Moreover, as indicated above, its solidarity movements and quality of life indices were already on a level higher than, for example, Romania or Moldova. In addition, while Hungary was limited by the carryover of some leadership from communism to the new democratic government and was therefore slowed in its transition, this country maintained a legacy of economic experimentation with an ability to innovate and find ways of working through financial turmoil—a key component in transition (Kapstein and Mandelbaum, 1997).

Change in Romania: Revolution or Coup d'état?

Before discussing a slower style of transition, it is important to first explore the starting point for Romania's transition, and how this origin is significant for the changes in government. As the 1980's drew to a close, Romania followed the lead of countries located in the western portion of Eastern Europe and distanced itself from Soviet power. While Romanian President Nicolae Ceauşescu began distancing Romania from the Soviets in the 1970's to support his nationalist tendencies, the education system continued to model the Soviet system in form and function. By 1989, Romania's economy was weak and the citizen support for Ceauşescu's continued leadership had waned, leading to an undercurrent of support for a change in government (Behr, 1991). On December 22, 1989, at 12:08 pm, following what was supposed to be a pro-

government rally headed by Ceauşescu, he and his wife, Elena, were arrested and charged with multiple crimes. They were later tried and executed on December 25, 1989, which symbolized the end of their reign and that of totalitarianism in Romania.

Although the head of state was executed and many others in power lost their positions, Romania did not experience a change in power due to an uprising of the people, and therefore did not have a revolution. To this point, the timing of the revolution was ill-coordinated and did not represent causality of the change in government; moreover, the events surrounding the coup were seemingly planned by those who later came into power (Siani-Davies, 2005). This question is critically important to explore because a revolution would symbolize "of the people" while a coup would represent internal regime change at the elite level. What is known is that many people died directly before and during the nationwide protests that arose—a clear sign that the events of December 22nd were to be taken seriously and, even if staged by elite with the support of the CIA and KGB as supported by observational remarks by émigrés, ended with fatal realities. What contributes to this event being a violent coup is that some of these protests occurred *after* the arrest of the Ceauşescu, indicating the suspicious nature of this event because a revolution would mean these events caused the subsequent arrest and deposal of Ceauşescu (Siani-Davies, 2005). Furthermore, high ranking Communist party officials later took major roles in the new government, which means a large percentage of alternative elite were not elected as in the revolutions of Czech Republic and Poland. Therefore, if the government did not change substantially in form and if many of the same officials remained in power afterwards, the power change in Romania more closely resembles a coup d'état than a true revolution. This delineation is highly significant due

to the difference in expectations one may have depending on whether or not a true revolution occurred, which characterizes the beginnings of Romanian democracy as being borne out of uncertainty. For clarity, I will refer to this change as a coup until further research clarifies the true nature of these events.

Styles of Democratization: Perestroika

With this understanding of the coup, Romania and other Balkan countries to the south and southwest, such as Bulgaria, underwent slower substantive reforms than their northern and western neighbors. Romania and Bulgaria followed Russian-style democratization known as *perestroika* and *glasnost* (Diamond & Plattner, 2002). These phenomena are defined as a type of reform whereby many, if not all, of the political elite remain in power and reforms are made at top-down, slow pace of reform that allows the elite to manage the opening of the decision-making process to the public even if many policies are created. In these cases, reforms can be frequent but not substantive and often too high-level to effectively change the core of the system or what occurs at the grass-roots level. In reference to Bremmer's J curve, Romania and Bulgaria followed the curve at a controlled pace to ensure the elite could maintain stability amidst significant change. These political elite held positions of authority in the regime from which the country transitioned as well as the new form of government toward which they transitioned. Hence, these political elite are not considered alternative to the former elite. As mentioned, since most of the government officials remained in power afterwards, these "reformed" Romanian leaders had the challenge of transitioning toward democracy despite a long and deep-rooted history of totalitarianism and communism that provided

no experience with democracy. Moreover, the newly formed government was not installed by the people and did not begin with support from the citizenry.

Styles of Democratization: Static Polity

Moldova is the final country example of democratic transition that I will explore briefly in this study. A country that borders northern Romania, Moldova was, as of 2010, the last country in Eastern Europe to begin its democratic transition. As the poorest country in all of Europe, it has not substantially reformed, despite the major changes that have occurred since 1989 throughout the rest of the region. Presently, Russian troops remain in the politically volatile Transnistrian region in eastern Moldova. On this border, the Russian presence seems to mirror the type of occupation that would manifest in both Moldova and Romania in 1953, when Soviets colonized both countries using military force (Verona, 1992). Moldova and Russia remain in a frozen conflict with no clear signs of an imminent settlement. Furthermore, after the 1953 troop invasion of Moldova and Romania, the Soviets installed communist leadership who quickly turned authoritarian (and later, in Romania, totalitarian). Like Romania during that time, Moldova still remains directly in the Russian sphere of influence despite being ethnically, culturally and linguistically Romanian. As the fourth example of a democratization pace in Eastern Europe, following on from sample representatives such as 1) Czech Republic and Poland; 2) Hungary; 3) Romania; Moldova represents the fourth group in its extreme right position in terms of transition. Based on the foundational discussions of these four styles of democratization, the following section will explore the underlying concept of decentralization and finally, transition.

Decentralization

Decentralization is a complex process because it is not always linear, and differs from country to country. As Ginsburg et al. (2010) explained, "(de)centralization covers a range of meanings, including a distinction between functional and territorial (de)centralization" (p. 5). Functional decentralization, as borrowed from Bray (1999), "'refers to a shift in the distribution of powers between various authorities that operate in parallel'" (p. 5). An example of this form of decentralization would be the distribution of authority from the Ministry of Education to universities to enable university autonomy. Territorial decentralization, however, "'refers to a redistribution of control among the different geographic tiers of government, such as nation, states/provinces, districts and schools'" (Bray, 1999 as cited in Ginsburg, 2010). An example of territorial decentralization would be the distribution of responsibilities to local administrations from the central, Ministry of Education in Romania. There are different forms of territorial decentralization such as deconcentration, defined by Ginsburg et al. as "the process through which a central authority establishes field units or branch offices, staffing them with its own officers" (p. 5). However, deconcentration does not equal civic empowerment or a guaranteed change for the citizen in terms of an increase in efficiency or effectiveness in receiving goods or services from government. Moreover, with decentralization or deconcentration comes an inherent need to educate and inform the officials who are responsible for each respective region or locale.

Transition Explored

Each country in Eastern Europe chose to transition toward democracy, whether the decision was made by the political elite or by popular demand. These transitions occurred at different paces, undertook different means and progressed toward somewhat different ends (e.g., more or less centralized government). Therefore, in this context, to transition meant not to follow the same path, but to seek reform that leads to a state of change between one form of government toward another. In each case within Eastern Europe, the form of government each country established (or attempted to establish) was a democracy. However, political reformation with the goal of becoming a stable democracy or implementing education reform to support democratization was not addressed cohesively or consistently across all of Eastern Europe; Each nation tackled the issue of political change in a different manner, at a different rate, and consequently, each nation encountered different challenges (Bassler, 2005). Therefore, transition is a political concept that must take into account the geopolitical context in which each country existed and which style of democratization each country attempted to follow, and finally, which form of democracy the country wished to adopt.[4]

Furthermore, each country had to address long-term consequences to stabilize and become a strong democracy. Figure 2 below explores emerging characteristics of transition:

---

[4] It is assumed in all cases within this study, based on overwhelming support from the literature and political statements and actions made by leaders within these cases, that the form of government toward which these countries transition is: democracy. Complicit in this transition is the desire to privatize and liberalize the economy.

Figure 2: Transition Characteristics

Transition Start
- How a country starts its transition is a critically important component of future impact

Short-term Needs
- Short-term needs such as stability, economy, currency, safety and systems are the first challenges to address and solve

Long-term Needs
- Long-term plans often conflict with the resources available and short-term needs, but must be addressed

Outcome
- If a balance is found between short- and long-term needs, a stable democratic trajectory is established; if not, the Wall remains intact

Based on these emerging themes, I have observed that two distinct types of transition paths ensue: those which began as an organic[5] revolution, or by the people, and those that followed a coup model, whereby many or all of the new government incorporated those from the previous regime. In Figure 3, below, the transition commences with an organic revolution and progresses on a path of demonstrable reform:

---

[5] A concept articulated by Diamond and Plattner, 2002.

Figure 3: Organic Transition
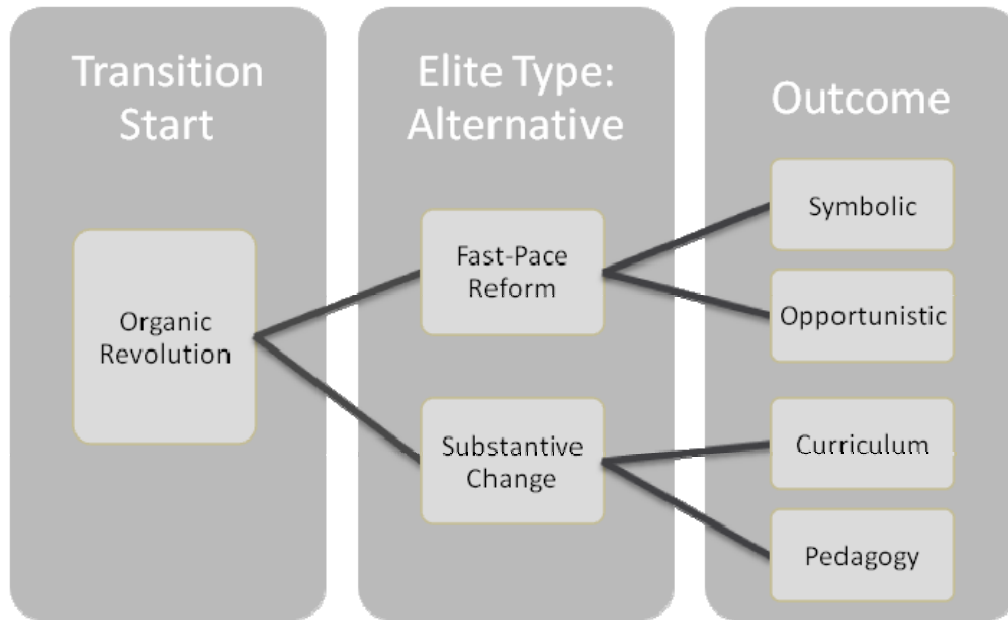
Unlike a transition that commenced with an organic revolution, the Figure 4 below

depicts a transition which begins with a coup d'état:

Figure 4: Coup Transition
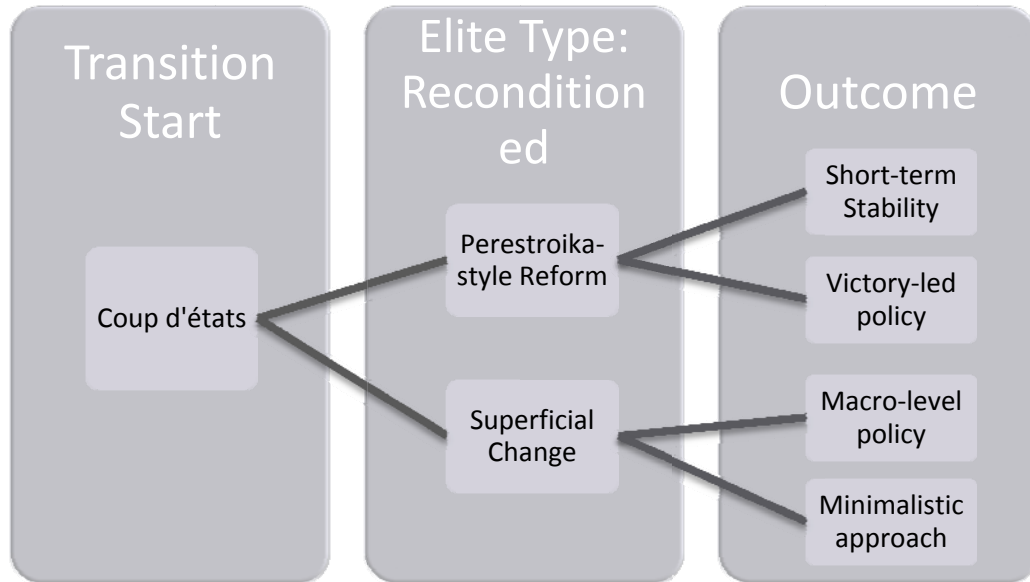
As these two figures depict, transition follows similar stages with vastly different decisions along each stage, and with diverging results. With this understanding, the origin of a transition is critically important for setting the tone and course of action for the ensuing transition.

Defining Democratic Education

The purpose of education in a democracy may overlap with education within any political system in that it imparts certain forms of information, knowledge and values to the next generation of citizens. The mission of education in a democracy, especially democracies with capitalistic economic systems, is in preparing the student for a life as a democratic citizen as well as a life as a worker in the capitalist economy. Since Horace Mann championed mass education, and later John Dewey who conceptualized citizenship

education, education has taken on an increasingly economic-focused ideology, possibly to the detriment of citizenship education (Levin, 1981).

Democratic education is defined as informing and preparing students for civic life and life as a citizen, including skills for a career or vocation, within a democratic society (Gutmann, 2002). As citizenship education expert David Kerr writes,

[c]itizenship or civics education is construed broadly to encompass the preparation of young people [students] for their roles and responsibilities as citizens, and, in particular, the role of education (through schooling, teaching and learning in that preparatory process (Lawton et al., 2000, p. 201).

Democratic education has two components; first, civics education, i.e., imparting students the ability to participate in voting, lobbying and engaging in the functional aspects of government as a citizen; and second, citizenship education, i.e., imparting the ability to students to engage in non-governmental aspects of a democracy, such as volunteering, understanding responsibilities and rights as citizens, and the ability to understand and apply democratic values such as individual freedom balanced with community-building (Lawton et al., 2000).

To support the teaching of civic and citizenship education, teachers play a critically important role. As citizens, teachers must embody democratic values and be able to impart the characteristics and skills of a democratic citizen. As explained by political scientist James Banks (2001), "[t]eachers must develop reflective cultural, national, and global identifications themselves if they are to help students become thoughtful, caring, and reflective citizens…" (p. 5). Teachers must embrace values such as human rights, equality, equity and inclusion (of ethnic diversity), to instruct effectively

(Banks, p. 6). Finally, teachers in democracies may contend with traditional approaches of democratic education, which included assimilation (toward one norm), and recently with multicultural perspective (acknowledging many norms); The curriculum may reflect varying degrees of these values, often leaving teachers with the responsibility of determining the outcome of which approach to take. Within this reality, the teacher has the power to shape student's lives within a democracy.

While one major component of democratic education requires a competent and trained teacher force, and the other major component of critical importance is: curriculum. Citizenship and civic education curricula comprise two approaches which can be combined, ideally, and are less effective when separate: standalone courses and integrated cross-subject instruction (Kennedy, 1997). Moreover, the curriculum must be understood and implemented fully to be effective, especially taking into account the comprehension of the philosophical and ideological aspects of the curriculum (Kennedy, 1997). In addition to providing a framework for understanding civic duties and the operational functions of a democracy, a democratic curriculum is also the arena to possibly discuss and address issues of inequity, overcome a patriarchal past through the instruction of feminist theory, and overall, cultivate ways to empower all of the citizenry through this framework; This approach is considered to be an inclusive democratic curriculum (Kennedy, 1997). Also, this approach as outlined does not exist in every democracy or in every classroom, but the potential for its integration exists, especially in transitional democracies which possess an opportunity for a fresh start.

One potential limitation of civic and citizenship education is the textbook availability and selection, as this component of the curriculum provides a backbone for

what is taught. Besides potentially exploring for supplementary materials to overcome limitations in textbooks, other solutions exist to the limitation of textbooks. For example, in addition to teaching a dedicated course on civic or citizenship education within history or social studies classes throughout K-12, whether through the assimilation approach, multicultural or inclusion approach (or some combination), citizenship education can be taught also in other subject areas through the applications of values and norms, such as team-work, critical thinking and empowerment of the student in the classroom, among other approaches. Whether through a specific class, applied lessons in other classes, or after-school activities (volunteering), curriculum provides a foundation for teachers to instruct citizenship education.

Education and Nation Building

Whether variance exists within the paradigm of citizenship and civic education regarding curriculum and instruction, commonality exits regarding education in a democracy as it relates to nation-building. As a political and territorial unit, the democratic nation-state is comprises of a political representation of the citizenry who share a history, cultural heritage and rule of law with some overlap of common ideology (Zajda et al., 2009). To sustain a democratic nation-state, the role of the citizen is a critical and essential component; therefore, the teaching of citizenship education in a democracy is significantly important. Ranging from understanding national identity as territory, community, citizenship and common values, education is the main institution charged with imparting the necessary skills for the citizenry to function effectively. Moreover, citizenship education plays a role in preparing the citizenry for engaging in

discourse and action regarding the issues pertaining to power division between local, state and national/federal as well as among and between various cultures and ethnic groups within a nation-state. Not every education system takes full advantage of the benefits of citizenship and civic education as it relates to nation-building, and various degrees of empowering citizens via citizenship education exist (Zajda et al., 2009). Finally, citizenship and nation-building now contend with the notion of the global citizen, which brings into question issues pertaining to globalization and contending with the balance of nationalism and cosmopolitanism.[6]

In addition to nation-building and citizenship/civic education, a democratic education often includes an increasing value on the economy in many capitalistic democracies. Levin (1981) writes that now, "a main educational function is to prepare children for workplace roles, education's organizational forms and functions tend to correspond to those of the workplace" (p. 1). Within the reality that the availability of jobs in the workforce requires less education than what the populations receives is the assumption that equal opportunity and workplace hierarchy are at odds with the education system (Levin, 1981). Thus, if the workplace does not include broadly four main attributes, "emphasizing participatory decision-making, individual problem-solving, minimum competencies, and peer tutoring," educating students for the economy requires additional alignment to be more effective in that the workforce and work place must adapt to the principles taught in a democratic education system (p. 1).

_____

[6] Cosmopolitanism is defined by Appiah as understanding the ethical implications of one's role as a global citizen. While "cosmopolitan moral judgment" does not require that global "neighbors" have relationships as with literal neighbors, cosmopolitanism requires an intelligence, curiosity and engagement in understanding our global neighbors because we are now, more than ever, interconnected (Appiah, 2006).

Conceptual and Theoretical Traditions

Having provided a brief overview of Eastern Europe and Romania in particular,

coupled with an exploration of democracy, democratization, decentralization, transition,

democratic education, education and nation-building, I will now delve into the various

forces and related exploratory concepts and theories. The first concept I will outline is

colonialism, whose historical significance is necessary to ground other concepts such as

globalization and, later, isomorphism. Each of these concepts will first be defined and

later applied to Eastern Europe and Romania.

Colonialism

Introduction

Colonization represents one of the most significant exogenous forces that affected

Romania and other countries in Eastern Europe due to the fact that it represents a long-

established historical precedent deeply integrated into the culture and politics of each

country, as I will explore below. Critics of colonization use colonialism theory to discuss

its negative, malevolent nature as a system of suppression, exploitation and subjugation.

Sympathizers point out the positive impact of colonization on the colonized country,

ranging from improved infrastructure development to strengthened cultural and religious

identity. In both cases, the words *colonialism* and *colonization* are sometimes used

interchangeably both for theory and phenomena in the literature. Both words represent

the act of foreign rule, and I will use identifying language when discussing the theory of

colonialism or the act of colonizing. I will explore both facets of this complex theory with

the goal of moving beyond a bimodal assessment of the phenomenon of colonialism as being either positive or negative; rather, I will focus on the range of effects.

Defining Colonialism and Neocolonialism

Colonialism has varying definitions but retains the common tenet of foreign rule via the act of using force to control for the purpose of benefitting the aggressor militarily or economically, or both (Bernhard, Reenock & Nordstrom, 2004). The extent and significance of the rule varies depending on the colonizing force and duration of rule, but can comprise a range in terms of respective forms of government, i.e., authoritarian, communist, or democratic. In some cases, the purpose of colonizing is to exploit the colony's resources. In other cases, colonization is part of a larger military strategy, often with the colony providing the first line of defense as an offensive military or economic staging point for the colonizing group. In either case, colonialism benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. In addition to using the natural and human resources of the colony to enrich or protect the home country, colonization often has less tangible effects. As political scientist Albert Memmi argues,

> [c]olonization materially kills the colonized. It must be added that it kills him spiritually. Colonization distorts relationships, destroys or petrifies institutions, and corrupts men, both colonizers and colonized (2003, p. 151).

These negative aspects of colonialism, here called "colonization" by Memmi, bring forth the need for a specific definition for clarity. Social scientist Arif Dirlik explained colonialism as

the political control by one nation of another nation or of a society striving to

become a nation. Where a colony [has] already achieved formal political

independence but still could not claim full autonomy due primarily to economic

but also to ideological reasons, the preferred term [is] neo-colonialism (2002, p.

430).

Whereas colonialism involves direct and overt ruling over a country or territory,

neocolonialism is more subtle and can appear in the form of countries or even companies

or institutions that take advantage of their position of power and exploiting the less

powerful. Moreover, neocolonialists may contend that there are "good" or "wicked"

colonialists, and the failures account for the latter, as opposed to the system of

neocolonialism itself—a system of control and exploitation, albeit officially subtle, and

unofficially significant (Sartre, p. 36, 2001).This explanation shows the complexity of

neocolonialism in that the supporters do not believe the negative effects to be the fault of

the colonizer but instead that of the colonized.

A History of Colonialism in Eastern Europe: The Roman Empire

Colonialism in Eastern Europe started with the Roman Empire and progressed

through various other powers such as the Ottoman, Hapsburg and Soviet empires. When

the Romans first entered Dacia (modern day Romania), for example, they exploited the

land for its geographic proximity to northern Crimea, a powerful military stronghold of

the region. This colonization commenced under the auspices of the Roman Emperor

Trajan between 101 and 106 AD. Romans later discovered the fruitful plains surrounding

the Danube River and the wealth of gold deposits in the northern Transylvanian Alps.

Romania, or Dacia Traiana as it was called in commemoration of the Dacian ethnic people and Emperor Trajan, was at the frontier of the Roman Empire so it was not ruled with the same military intensity as locations closer to Rome (King, 2004).

Rome's colonial rule only endured until a brief battle with the native Dacians in 275 AD, at which point the Empire no longer controlled lands north of the Danube—per the decision of Emperor Aurelian—Dacia was essentially abandoned by the Romans to the native Dacians. Following the exodus of the imperial Roman army, much of the Roman population, technology and infrastructure were left in Dacia. As a result, the Roman Empire is the first example of how colonial powers both exploited Romania and also left behind beneficial technologies and customs. Thus, the Roman Empire influenced Romania and contributed to shaping its approximate modern borders and language.

The Ottoman Empire and Romania

The second major colonial empire that affected the Romanians and their Eastern European neighbors was the Ottoman Empire, a vast and complex political entity which lasted from approximately 1600 AD until the close of World War I in 1918. Unlike the land-based Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire controlled both land and sea. Also unlike the Romans, the Ottomans used diplomacy and tried to create vassal states or tax-paying entities within their empire—a move that bridged the divide between colonialism and neocolonialism. This decision to establish partnerships with colonized groups—albeit with the threat of violent intervention—led to the immense wealth and longevity of the Ottoman Empire. The downfall of the Ottoman Empire was its very size and scope:

occupying lands from Central Europe to as far as Saudi Arabia created a territory far too large to control and sustain (King, 2004).

The Ottomans were instrumental in establishing many of Romania's modern-day borders, creating its large government bureaucracy and for allowing it to retain religious sovereignty as an Orthodox Christian country. The sense of unity created by this shared Orthodox faith and ethnic heritage enabled Romania's culture to solidify. Although managing the Ottoman Empire required violent suppression, its lasting legacy in the region was the solidification of the individual ethnic cultures that it dominated while concurrently exploiting them to achieve wealth through taxation and trade (King, 2004). During Ottoman colonialism, Romania did not control its political destiny and had no official form of government to protect its interests. Moreover, the leadership that had any authority reported to the Ottomans—a point that will later be discussed with regard to the culture of Romanian elite in post-coup Romania.

Habsburg Empire and Romania

By the late 1800's, the Ottoman influence over Romania and Eastern Europe had waned, although the Ottomans still nominally controlled a portion of Southeast Europe until the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and World War I. During this time, Romania was briefly free from involuntary colonial rule that required them to choose between existence as a suzerainty or war with a colonizing nation. However, the dissolution of Ottoman domination meant relinquishing its military protection. For self-preservation, Romanian political elite signed a secret but iron-clad treaty in 1883 with the Habsburg rulers of Austria-Hungary, who promised protection against the aggressive Russian empire to the

north (Jelavich, 1983). As a result, a German-born Romanian king was installed, and through this connection, the Habsburg Empire controlled taxation and trade. Born out of the need for military protection, this alliance made the Habsburg Empire the third major colonial force in Romania's history, albeit one that was nominally voluntary. One benefit of the alliance was that Romania increasingly traded with the West, thereby establishing a connection to Western Europe. The Habsburg Empire therefore brought Romania into the fold of Europe and away from Eastern influences such as Russia or the Middle East. However, the Habsburg Empire continued to increase taxation on Romania until World War I, which marked the start of Romania's second brief period of freedom from colonial rule (Jelavich, 1983).

Colonialism Transforming into Neocolonialism: Romania and the Soviet Union

From the end of World War I until the Soviet Union's official invasion in 1953, Romania maintained its own semi-autonomous, constitutional but authoritarian monarchy. During this period, the Soviet influence was only checked by German military supremacy in Eastern Europe, a byproduct of the Hapsburg dominance (Verona, 1992). After World War II, Germany no longer acted as a military buffer, which allowed the Soviets to successfully invade Romania following a brief fascist regime that set the stage for subsequent communism (Verona, 1992). Although the ensuing Soviet-Romanian armistice expressed that the Soviets agreed to "respect the territorial integrity of Romania and its social and economic institutions," the truth was to become the very opposite (Verona, 1992, p. 27). Almost overnight, the Soviet Union became both a protector and a colonizer. The burgeoning communist movement in Romania became distinctly

Stalinist—violent, authoritarian and deeply destructive of individual culture and religion, as well as social and educational institutions (Tismaneanu, 2003).

This Soviet influence, which lasted until Romania's revolution in 1989, marked the deepest and most influential colonial-type period in Romania's recent history because it exemplified aspects of colonialism and neocolonialism. On the one hand, the Soviet Union during these years controlled all aspects of political and economic life in Romania. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was both a protector and advisor, not simply a colonizing force. It is this combination of Soviet colonialism and neocolonialism that deeply impacted Romania and created challenges for its transition away from their form of rule.

Furthermore, this type of neocolonialism fostered a factory-like education system, whereby students were created like products to participate in the totalitarian regime. Without a liberal arts higher education, defined as a type of education that focuses on arts, sciences, and humanities in a pre-professional four-year institution, citizens had no choice but to fall into narrower employment opportunities in engineering or accounting, for example (Breneman, 1990). Wages, food, rent and education were controlled by government. This economic perspective shows how the passive citizen was created via abject oppression—a challenge that would later manifest during post-communist transition (Breneman, 1990).

Exogenous Forces on Eastern Europe: Neocolonialism Continued

Following World War II, neocolonialism emerged as an alternative to traditional colonialism, a way for powerful countries like the Soviet Union to gain wealth and

maintain control over less powerful countries. As mentioned, the Romanian case is unique: because, technically, Romania remained an autonomous state, as the Soviet Empire behaved simultaneously like a colonizer and a neocolonizer.[7] As with other Eastern European countries after WWII who experienced Soviet rule via "subservience," these countries, including Romania, were "subject to the dictates of the Soviet regime through violence and the threat of violence" (Rose et al., 1998, p. 36). However, Romania was not completely sovereign because it lacked supreme control over the workings of its country, ranging from lacking sovereign control of the economy vis-à-vis trade to education and its curriculum (Gallagher, 2005). In all cases, neocolonialism is therefore controlling as with traditional colonialism, but subtle because geographic borders and the perception of sovereignty are preserved. Thus, neocolonialism can be potentially as devastating because it has the illusion of being less lethal. For example, Romania was independent under Soviet rule but because the Soviets allowed for *perceived* sovereignty, the Soviets could deeply influence Romania's culture, education and economy (Gallagher, 2005). As I will later discuss, the Romanian government replicated the secret police, government and even the educational structure of the Soviet Union. While neocolonialism is a challenging phenomenon to study from outside a country, the indicators of this force within a nation are clear enough to yield effects that can be evaluated in future studies. These future studies could provide decision-makers with the skills and knowledge to avoid future attacks on their country's sovereignty.

---

[7] In October of 1944, Churchill visited Stalin and the following was asked: "how would it do for you [Russia] to have ninety per cent dominance in Rumania…" (Glenny, 1999, p. 522). Stalin accepted, and Romania's fate was decided.

Neocolonialism and post-coup Romania

A recent example of neocolonialism and its effect on Romania is that of a privately held Canadian mining company. Gold is currently being mined by a company named Alburnus Maior, a name borrowed from the Ancient Romans, despite the fact that it has been 2000 years since the Roman Empire occupied Romania (http://www.grist.org). This Canadian company renamed itself to seem familiar and innocuous to the Romanian population; it sounds indigenous, but it does not benefit Romanians. Although the Romanian government will receive tariff money, locals are being displaced due to the destructive nature of the mining techniques and are not provided with adequate compensation.

Colonialism's Lingering Effects

Based on their understanding of how colonialism is defined (powerful exploiting the less-powerful and the act of occupation via colonizing), Bernhard, Reenock and Nordstrom (2004) illustrated the division between the colonized and the colonizers (see Figure 5, below). Although the figure was developed to organize their data supporting a general study about colonialism, it clearly and compellingly delineates countries into their respective groups relevant to this case study: colonized and colonizer. Later, I will discuss concepts subsequent to colonialism, such as dependency theory and world-systems theory, to explore how countries of power and countries with less power remain largely in the same position during this case study as during the times of colonialism.

Figure 5: Colonized vs. Colonizers

Cases in the Data Set

European Overseas Colonialism

British
Antigua and Barbuda
Bahamas
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Botswana
Dominica
Gambia
Ghana
Grenada
Guyana
India
Jamaica
Kenya
Malawi
Malaysia
Mauritius
Myanmar
Namibia
Nigeria
St. Kitts and Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Trinidad
Uganda
Zambia

French
Benin
Burkina Faso
Chad
Congo
Haiti
Madagascar
Mali
Niger

Spanish
Argentina
Bolivia
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay
Venezuela

Other
American
Philippines
Dutch
Indonesia
Suriname
Portuguese
Brazil
Cape Verde
Mozambique
Sao Tome

Other Types

EIC
Andorra
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Czechoslovakia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Macedonia
Malta
Moldova
Norway
Poland
Romania
Slovakia
Slovenia
Ukraine

Colonial Powers
European
Austria
Belgium
Germany
Italy
Netherlands
Portugal
Russia
Spain
Sweden
France
United Kingdom
Asian
Japan
Turkey

Various
BSC
Australia
Canada
Israel
New Zealand
United States
Independent
Nepal
Switzerland
Thailand
Asian Colony
Mongolia
South Korea
Taiwan

Key
EIC – European Internal Colony
BSC – British Settler Colony

39

In many of the countries in the European Internal Colony (EIC) box in this figure, as well as other colonies around the world, the indelible mark of their former colonial status remains in the form of power preservation. With regard to Eastern Europe, the main source of the problem is that for over two thousand years, most Eastern European countries have lacked full control of their government institutions, including their education systems. To this day, Eastern Europe remains geographically situated between many of the same great powers that have fought for millennia to control this region. Within this context, Romania must contend with transitioning toward true sovereignty.

In sum, although Romania became an EU member state in 2007, it has a long history of being within the "box" of colonialism and has never been in a position of power outside of that box. Therefore, any consideration of reform, in education or other sectors, must take into consideration the legacy of colonialism and its lingering impact on systems, culture and leadership. Additionally, new exogenous forces have emerged from the literature as critically important when analyzing Romania's transition towards democracy and its education system. Hence, the issue of new exogenous forces will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Globalization

Introduction

In addition to the exogenous force of colonialism, globalization is an emerging global trend that supersedes the individual nation state but still overtly benefits the same core countries that were once colonizers. Like colonialism, globalization brings both positive and negative opportunities to the countries it impacts. Also, the theory that helps

explain and explore this phenomenon is used to demonstrate its positive, negative and uncertain impacts.

Globalization Defined

Although globalization has many definitions, Zuarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) combined various concepts in an attempt to define it: free markets, transnationalism, postnationality, imperialism, neocolonialism or Americanization (p. 9). What do these concepts or perspectives of globalization actually mean? Zuarez-Prozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) claimed that globalization is "best characterized as a set of processes that tend to de-territorialize important economic, social and cultural practices from their traditional boundaries in nation states" (p. 14). Such a definition prompts the question: who has the power to influence globalization? Critics of globalization argue that those groups with wealth and power drive the fundamental components of globalization (Burbules & Torres, 2000). If this assumption is true, is globalization really different from neocolonialism as a subversive form of preserving power and wealth? If this assumption is true, is globalization different from neocolonialism? The short answer is yes, but it is not without overlapping qualities. In addition, as with the conflicting effects of colonialism, globalization is not wholly negative and could possibly benefit Romania and other less powerful countries depending on the decisions elite make within this context.

Within the power paradigm set in place during colonialism, new methods of communication and commerce link countries otherwise historically isolated geographically. For example, world-wide use of the telephone, computer and internet has

connected countries throughout the world in new ways. These inventions are unique

because they link not only economic transactions but also the exchange of ideas. With

contemporary technology, both products and ideas can travel at the speed of electricity.

In addition, an increase in the frequency of communication may foster an increase in

innovation, which contributes to the building of a world-wide web of information. The

positive or negative impacts depend on intent—and who holds power. In an unchecked

realm, both negative and positive influences can expand at an equal rate: an effect which

delves deeply into systems, cultures and traditions. Globalization is therefore a powerful

force of change that, if unchecked, has the capacity to continue the legacy of colonialism.

Globalization: Modernization and Globalization Linked

Globalization is a phenomenon that has its roots in modernization. To better

understand globalization, modernism (terms often used interchangeably) must first be

defined. According to theorist Alvin So, modernization is:

> the extent to which tools and inanimate sources of power are utilized. Obviously,
>
> there is no society totally lacking in tools and inanimate sources of power, so
>
> modernization is only a matter of degree (So, 1990, p. 24).

Therefore, modernization is not simply the comparison of a culture, country or group of

individuals from one measurable point to another. So (1990) argued that modernization

could be reduced to the comparison of the *things* (possessions) one person/country has in

comparison to others, which leads toward assimilation or homogenization. This effect can

erode the unique traits of various cultures down to a banal existence. Within this

interconnectedness, however, lies the latent potential for a massive expansion of learning

and breaking down of barriers, which will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Another definition of modernization is the spread of pro-Western, capitalistic

values as a superior model of development. A supportive neoliberal perspective would

posit that the development of capitalist economies ensures that a free-market is

established where the economy is in control and government plays a secondary role. This

neoliberal perspective

> has given greater and greater rein to unregulated, private decision-making. The
>
> policy calls for reducing the economic roles of government in providing social
>
> welfare, in managing economic activity at the aggregate and sectoral levels, and
>
> in regulating international commerce (MacEwan, 1999, p. 4).

Although this perspective describes modernization via privatization, this same

perspective generates numerous challenges because neoliberal policies originate from the

core, powerful countries and the periphery, or powerless countries, are expected to fall in

line. For example, MacEwan (1999) observes that

> [o]fficials from the international lending agencies, particularly the IMF and the
>
> World Bank, from the governments of the economically advanced countries,
>
> particularly the United States, and from private, internationally operating firms
>
> use their economic and political power to foist 'market-oriented' policy on the
>
> peoples of the low-income countries (p. 4).

Critics of the neoliberalism, namely some political economists, would point to the status

quo of power since colonialism and the fact that a periphery of weaker and poorer

countries still remain after many years of neoliberal policy.

Additionally, many critiques exist when challenging the benefits of modernization and globalization. For example, the gap between rich and poor has increased since the advent of modernization in the post-WWII era and subsequent decades. Accordingly, "[a]fter [six] UN development decades the income gap between the [powerful] North and the [peripheral] South remains as wide as ever" (Mehmet, 1999, p. 121). Globalization can therefore be conceptualized as a continuation of modernization at an increased pace with wider-reaching effects. Furthermore, Alvin So criticizes neoliberal modernization and globalization for "ignor[ing] the crucial element of foreign domination" (1990, p. 58). Finally, proponents of modernization must contend with its strengths and weaknesses to slow or reverse centuries of core versus periphery domination. If not, globalization may simply continue the power relationships established under modernization, thereby minimizing the positive impact it may otherwise have on formerly-recognized periphery countries.

Globalization and Romania

A specific example of globalization's impact on Romania is the case of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) influence on the transition toward democracy. According to economist Joseph Stiglitz (2003), the post-coup potential of privatization in countries like Romania permitted the lending of capital at higher rates because new companies and banks could act as guarantors to IMF loans. Stiglitz purports that "this new strategy was first tried not on major countries like Brazil and Russia, but on powerless countries like Ecuador and Romania, too weak to resist the IMF" (p. 203). In the case of Romania, "it only wanted new money from the IMF to signal that it was

creditworthy, which would help to lower the interest rates it paid" (p. 203). Romania was

short on capital to guarantee loans, but the IMF still decided it was prudent to lend

Romania money. Unfortunately, because Romania was early in its transition toward

democracy and was still establishing a free-market economy, the IMF was lending money

to an inexperienced government and private sector leaders in Romania who saw loan

money as an opportunity to gain personal wealth and power (Stiglitz, 2003). In the end, to

receive the aid money, Romania needed to put forth a proportionate sum of cash to

receive IMF loans. However, the IMF strayed from typical lending ratios and when

"Romania appeared to be only $36 million of private sector loans short to receive the

billion-dollar aid package," the IMF simply raised the interest rates and granted the funds

despite this disqualification, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of IMF protocol, its

practices and the stability of the Romanian economy (Stiglitz, 2003, p. 204). This case

illustrates how the IMF, as an agent acting on the principles of the free-market economy,

of capitalism, and as a representative of Western powers, exploited inexperienced elite

leadership in Romania for the benefit of increasing profits. Concurrently, however,

Stiglitz highlights the abundance of economic resources to which the Romanian

leadership had access and potentially misused or were misguided in their use. Regardless

of the interpretation of this event, what started as a chance to increase the

creditworthiness of Romania created more debt for an already poor Eastern European

country.

Critics of Globalization: Dependency Theory and World-Systems Theory

Two major theories have emerged that criticize power relations in the world and support action that mitigates the negative implications of globalization. These two theories are known as dependency theory and world-systems theory. Although the theories are related, subtle differences exist. Dependency theory, defined by Alvin So, "represents 'the voices from the periphery' that challenge the intellectual hegemony of the American Modernization school" (1990, p. 91). This perspective illustrates the interconnection of modernization with colonialism. Moreover, proponents of this theory would argue that colonialism has nearly irrecoverably altered the potential of nations that were marginalized to a point where they are now *dependent* upon modern, developed countries with which they are unlikely to ever equal economically or militarily. Therefore, dependency theory is also

> understood to be an *external* condition that is imposed from the outside. The most important obstacle to national development, therefore, is not lack of capital, entrepreneurial skills, or democratic institutions; rather, it is to be found outside the domain of the national economy (So, 1990, p. 104).

This latter point speaks to the inequities that occur within development and modernization. Proponents of this theory would also argue that one way to narrow the equity gap between nations is if countries possessing more than a moderate share of resources sacrifice some of their power.

What is the solution to this imbalance? One solution is through the application of world-systems theory as an alternative to dependency theory. When considering this theory, Alvin So wrote that

> world-systems perspective is not a theory but a protest—"a protest against the ways in which social scientific inquiry was structured for all of us at its inception in the middle of the nineteenth century." Wallerstein criticizes the prevailing mode of scientific inquiry both for its "closing off rather than opening up" many important research questions and for its inability "to present rationally the real historical alternatives that lie before us" (So, 1990, p. 173).

Therefore, this theory challenges existing power relations, allowing for the world to be viewed through various lenses rather than simply being limited to bimodal or opposite terms that limit the view of reality. Furthermore, he argues that "the conception of a bimodal system…is too complicated to be classified as [such], with cores and peripheries only" (So, 1990, p. 180). Therefore, to counteract a complicated force like globalization, it must be viewed from a different mindset than what colonialism or anti-colonialism (independent vs. dependent) theories purport.

Additionally, world-systems theory necessitates an understanding of a few key concepts that are clearly portrayed by Chase-Dunn and Grimes (1995):

- [h]ow different definitions of the world-system concept imply different ways of breaking down history into discrete periods (e.g., when did the current system begin, and what are the relevant criteria for separating it from other systems in either time or space?);

- [h]ow the patterned changes introduced by trends and cycles structure the reproduction of the modem world-system; and

- [h]ow the global hierarchy of wealth and power reproduces itself by the constraints it imposes on the range of policy options for most nations (p. 388).

These three main constructs provide an understanding that world-systems theory is as complicated as the theories and forces it seeks to critique. However, within its complexity exists the ability to clarify a unique perspective on reality. For example, the "reproduction" of various systems is particularly important as it relates to education. For example, if there are flaws in a system that is replicated within another country or countries, the flaws are therefore replicated on larger scale. Furthermore, if the world-systems of powerful, less powerful and powerless are replicated, those with power will retain power, and those without power will remain powerless regardless of the opportunities that exist within phenomena such as globalization. By critically analyzing the relationships between countries, it is possible to understand that according to world-systems theory, basic power relationships have not changed since the advent of colonialism and are therefore perpetuated through neoliberal economic policies. However, with the replication of power relations is the ability for knowledge and opportunity to expand within these systems—therein lies the potential for positive change.

Modernism and Globalization: additional critiques with a long-term perspective

For those who wish to address the negative effects of modernization and globalization from a practical level, a long-term strategy may be a suitable alternative. One alternative way to view modernization or globalization is not only

> in terms of outcomes and gains (e.g., incomes, goods and services)… [I]t is also important to evaluate it in terms of what people give up or lose (and why they resist) in experiencing development in these terms. In addition, who gets left out?" (McMichael, 1996, p. 3).

Combined, both short-term and long-term consequences may render globalization negative because many political elite within powerful countries may never consider the wide-reaching and long-term effects their actions have on other citizens around the world. Even worse, these elite may not exhibit consideration for the global citizenry due to purely focusing on domestic issues that today reverberate world-wide, potentially "leaving out" their own citizenry as well as the international citizenry. Furthermore, those who espouse neoliberal economic theory view citizens of the world as rational actors in a supposedly free-market global economy, actors who harbor perfect information to make decisions. This economic perspective is flawed because it negates the issue of power, the lingering effects of colonialism and the imperfect distribution and accuracy of information. While understanding this discussion is important for historical and political context, the way in which globalization impacts education is critically important, as I will explore in the following section.

Globalization: Impact on Education

Many communities, states or countries must contend with balancing individual culture and tradition with trends and beliefs that are spread by globalization. One tradition that is being exported is that of "tuning" or "harmonizing" education systems, two synonymous concepts used to explain the process of assimilating education systems to adhere to one agreed upon framework. Fortunately, it is possible to find common development traits that pertain to any country, e.g., all countries must educate their children. Actions such as the United Nation's campaign, Education for All, coupled with an overall renewed awareness about education's importance as a human right, results from globalization's spread of these ideas. However, globalization is not always accompanied by answers to the questions of what should be taught, how and toward what end.

Without homogenizing school systems to exactly mirror Western Europe or the U.S., countries like Romania can still prepare their students to compete in the global market and also help contribute to a stronger nation-state while preserving some sense of unique education. Education, therefore, can serve both domestic and global interests as an institution of change (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). In some cases, peripheral countries' curricula have not kept pace with core countries; in these cases, technology via the computer and internet can help mitigate such discrepancies, to a degree. The key, however, is to help education remain relevant without losing sight of local culture and values. As I will discuss in the section illustrating isomorphism, Romania has been directly contending with the challenges of transition while benefiting from positive

aspects garnered from Western Europe and the U.S. At the same time, Romania contends

with the challenges of avoiding mimetic isomorphism, a term that explains copying to the

point of assimilation and homogenization. For example, avoiding a consumerist economy

and culture that have harmful ecological implications (such as the Canadian mining

company) must be considered by the Romanian government. While a challenge for a

nascent democracy, what better time than at the beginning to curb aspects of neoliberal

policy that are, in retrospect, a mistake? I will explore this concept in the following

section to demonstrate the power of truly learning from a global perspective.

The Ill-effects of Globalization: Consumerism

Although achieving equity and equality are important as ways of resolving

historic power struggles manifested by colonialism, for example, and are supported in

many ways by positive aspects of globalization and the spread of these ideals, negative

impacts of globalization threaten these potential advances. Moreover, progress in terms

of humanitarian freedom may be compromised by a solitary aspect of globalization: the

spread of consumerism and destruction of the environment. While seemingly an issue for

ecologists, the tangible ecological effects of globalization may soon take priority because

of the fundamental values of needing suitable living conditions, e.g., clean water and

clean air. However, while these effects may shift priorities for ecological purposes, the

benefits of this shift will, by application, address issues of equity, as I will explore in this

section. Because globalization spreads Western- and U.S.-centric economic models due

to its links with neoliberal policy, which inherently use consumer economy to sustain

wealth, over-consumption itself becomes a major negative byproduct of globalization

from the perspective of sustainability. If the pace of consumption continues without citizens of industrialized countries exercising more frugality, not only will consumption of natural resources reach a critical point, disposal sites for the resources and their byproducts will also become scarcer and possibly more damaging to the communities in the vicinity. For example, landfills are quickly meeting capacity throughout the world, and new locations are continuously being sought: trash from wealthy, powerful countries is being sent to poorer countries. Even trash has found its way into the global ecological system: "[o]n a beach north of Salvador, Brazil, [where a] man who runs an organization called Global Garbage has identified rubbish from sixty-nine countries" (Levine, 2006, p. 5). This fact demonstrates the global effects of individual waste. Furthermore, with trash being shipped around the world, the global effects of consumerism precipitates the urgent need to evaluate the difference between *want* and *need.*

Consumerism, therefore, is not simply the source of widespread resource depletion but also the origin of resource inequity. Although strict neoliberal economic theories would not support resource distribution via government intervention, it is still possible to operate within these theories to have positive results. For example, "global military spending totaled $956 billion this year, while the cost of effectively combating poverty would be $40-$70 billion. The U.S. spent $450 billion on the military and $15 billion for development to help poor countries, a 30-1 ratio" (Levine, 2006, p. 246). Therefore, on a national and international level, cutting back on military spending could provide immediate financial resources that could be used to promote education, combat poverty and illness, and create more opportunities for peace. While additional solutions will be discussed in later chapters, it is important in this section to consider some of the

alternatives that exist within a globalized world from which transitional democracies can chose if they are fortunate to have the latitude and foresight to select wisely. Moreover, countries like Romania will look to established democracies for a template (Carothers, 1996). If that template exhibits overspending on military and overconsumption in general, it is likely that these negative trends may be mimicked along with the positive attributes of democracy and individual freedom, a balance that can be made if the institution of education is considered as part of the solution of democratization. Finally, in the next section, I will explore the third major emerging theory by exploring isomorphism.

Isomorphism

Introduction

As with colonialism and globalization, isomorphism as a phenomenon represents an exogenous force that impacted Romania and other Eastern European countries in their transition toward democracy. Another similarity is that isomorphism, like colonialism and globalization, can be simultaneously supported and criticized by researchers, depending on their perspective. In the case of Romania, isomorphism manifests itself primarily as EU policy and a tendency to mimic aspects of key Western education systems, which created positive, negative and ambiguous effects in Romania. In this section, I will define isomorphism and explore how it represents the third emerging phenomenon with which Romania and other countries in Eastern Europe had to contend.

Defining Isomorphism

From colonialism to neocolonialism, and from dependency theory and world-systems theory to globalization, many powerful forces shape the world in which we live. Although some solutions exist to mitigate some of the negative aspects I have outlined, a clear pattern has emerged whereby a few select countries continue to maintain power and economic supremacy. This result allows for certain dominant countries like those in Western Europe and the United States to have a more powerful voice in global affairs in comparison to poorer countries like Romania or Bulgaria. This status quo also creates a paradigm whereby poorer or less powerful countries model themselves after wealthier, powerful countries in the hopes of gaining a developmental advantage. This mindset has placed Eastern Europe in a position where it continues to adhere to Western European suggestions through the auspices of the EU. While the EU is by no means a colonizer or even a neocolonizer, it does represent a foreign entity founded by historically colonizer countries which formerly colonized countries choose to join to remain developmentally and economically relevant. Because of the nuanced and real difference between the previous exogenous forces, an emerging concept best describes this new force of change: isomorphism. According to social scientist Powell and DiMaggio (1983),

> [there are] three mechanisms through which institutional isomorphic change occurs: coercive isomorphism that stems from political influence and the problem of legitimacy; mimetic isomorphism resulting from standard responses to uncertainty; and normative isomorphism, associated with professionalization (p. 150).

However, Powell and DiMaggio (1983) highlighted "[t]his typology [as] an analytic one: the types are not always empirically distinct" (p. 150). As it relates to this case study, isomorphism as a concept describing change or reform is not always distinctly coercive, mimetic or normative. For example, the type of pressures exerted by the EU may fulfill the definition of each type of isomorphism, depending on whether the policy is a mandate or hortatory or if monetary incentives are involved. Regardless of which specific type of isomorphism exists, it is clear that the EU exerts pressures to which new members must adhere. Powell and DiMaggio's title for their pivotal work on isomorphism aptly characterizes it: "The Iron Cage."

Therefore, the impact of organizational and economic changes on a country's populace is an emerging research area for organizational, institutional and educational researchers. In addition, the theory to explain the force of isomorphism is new and sparse, which is one reason this case study is attempting to fill in gap in the literature. For the purpose of this case study, however, isomorphism refers to exogenous pressures exerted by institutions such as the EU as it relates to reform in Eastern Europe and Romania in particular.

The European Union and Isomorphism

The European Union (EU) was founded in 1992, directly following the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Romania's among them. Based on the Treaty on European Union, or the Maastricht Treaty, the EU is an international system of governance for European member-states who fulfill certain qualifications for entry (McCormick, 2005). Although the EU is new in its present form,

Europe has a history of trying to create such an institution for centuries, arguably

reaching back as far as the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 (McCormick, 2005). Currently,

the EU combines the power and authority of each of its member states to allegedly

support their collective interests on the international stage. Therefore, the EU seeks to

ensure that all of its member-states are aligned in various sectors such as the economy via

the euro as a common currency, transparency and judicial reform. While education

standards are not officially a requisite for EU entry, unlike political or economic

standards, the EU's Bologna Declaration of 1999, Socrates-Erasmus and the Education

Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS) are all followed by member states as

if they are requirements of membership.

Although the original discourse on EU educational reform started before the final

meeting in Bologna, it is still referred to as the Bologna Declaration, Bologna Accords or

Bologna Process. These Accords "emphasized the creation of the European area of

higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the

Continent's overall development (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p. 1-2). This focus on

higher education is due to the theory that

> University students, whose studies often involve both explicit and implicit
>
> comparisons among political systems (including democratic ones) become more
>
> knowledgeable of and concerned with their own political rights and civil liberties
>
> (Benavot, 1996, p. 386).

Because Education Act 84, otherwise known as the Romanian Education Law of 1995,

which will be discussed in a following section, was created prior to the Bologna Process

in 1995 to support reform of the country's education, Romania was poised to begin to

make demonstrable reforms to their education system and successfully satisfy Bologna initiatives.

Specifically, the Bologna Process calls for the following changes:

1) Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;

2) Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate;

3) Establishment of a system of credits – such as in the ECTS system – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility

4) Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to…students [and] teachers, researchers and administrative staff;

5) Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies; and

6) Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research" (Bologna Declaration).

Again, because Romania already undertook many of these reforms by 1999, it is the latter point with regard to quality assurance with which Romania struggled. Due to its heavy emphasis on mathematics and engineering, Romania did not have a higher education system with a strong liberal arts program or primary and secondary schools that could prepare students for a liberal arts education, which is something Western European countries valued and desired from member states based on ECTS

requirements. As a result, Romania has had to shift away from core strengths and sources of cultural pride—mathematics and engineering—to accommodate liberal arts and liberal economics. However, because the strengths of mathematics and engineering (a positive attribute) came with the totalitarian regime (a destructive attribute), cultural values and historical perspectives have become conflated, leaving Romania in a conflicted position. In short, many challenges exist with which Romania must contend to parse apart what aspects of its history are important to renew as contemporary values while adhering to EU and Western reforms, which may conflict with some of those values and traditions.

Although the EU exhibits many sound policies and principles from the perspective that they originate from stable and strong democracies, this institution still has issues to resolve with regard to fundamental theories and reforms such as its education policy. Although positive on the surface, EU-endorsed education reform such as the Bologna process will alter the fabric of Romanian culture, providing the potential for economic gains but ensuring some cultural compromise. The process of assimilation, coupled with isomorphic pressures created by the EU, homogenize cultures. At the same time, the recent violent and oppressive past have left aspects of culture that institutions such as the EU can help restore or refine through advocating for democratic processes and values.

European Union and Romania

Romania's ability to retain a strong identity amidst a history of great instability could very well be jeopardized by efforts to become more like Western Europe.

Historically, Romania has remained a cohesive culture for millennia due to centuries of effort to retain an original and strong cultural core for the purpose of stability. Because the EU is not a static organization that simply grants compliant countries accession, it is plausible but not certain that changes Romania undertook and still undertakes to become and stay a member may jeopardize the traditions that have kept Romania as a cohesive country for centuries. In addition, this organization experienced many changes that threaten its very existence. In the spring of 2004, French and Dutch voters rejected the EU constitution because of the "EU's poor economic record and its failure to maintain the sense of direction, homogeneity, identity, common purpose, and effectiveness that had carried the European project in its earlier years, however indeterminate the project may have been" (Cohen-Tanugi, 2005, p. 4). This rejection may signal to Romania and other potential members that the EU is somewhat unstable and unprepared to take on additional members in a way that would benefit the new members.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether the EU would want to add more members due to not demonstrating that it can adequately tend to current member needs. Moreover, just as it was gaining momentum,

> [i]t is ironic that the EU stumbled just as the Bush administration was beginning to acknowledge its existence and even its virtues" (Cohen-Tanugi, 2005, p. 8). Despite its recent difficulties, the EU is still considered "one of the key pillars of Western identity and global stability—and the most progressive political experiment of our time (Cohen-Tanugi, 2005, p. 8).

Cohen-Tanugi speaks to the inherent challenge of the EU in this comment, i.e., supporting democratic countries using centralized rule. This concept is counter-intuitive

and theoretically would almost guarantee failure if the countries involved were not so interested and financially invested in making the EU a success. For stability, however,

> Intergovernmentalists must accept that the EU is a community of citizens, not only of states, and supranationalists must accept that democracy can exist among EU members without their merging into a single polity that expresses its will through traditional state-like institutions (Nicolaidis, 2004, p. 3).

These fundamental realizations are crucial to the success of the EU, especially if it is to benefit Romania and other newly democratized countries. Moreover, the EU must become something other than the "United States of Europe" (Nicolaidis, 2004, p. 1). Presumably, to turn sovereign countries into, essentially, tax-paying vassal states would bring countries like Romania back into a situation not unlike the time of Ottoman rule, when Romania was a vassal state because it lacked the authority to act in its own best interest.

In this struggle for the EU to define itself as a centralizing institution while remaining pro-democracy, a few major shifts must occur. Nicolaidis (2004) wrote that the Romanian government should be

> seeking the mutual recognition of all of the members' identities rather than a common identity; promoting a community of projects, not a community of identity; and sharing governance horizontally, among states, rather than only vertically, between states and the union (p. 4).

These changes can solidify the EU by demonstrating that it is more than a homogenizing institution of Europe and avoid turning it into a "normative signpost" only if such theories are implemented and lead to action (Nicolaidis, 2004, p. 8). Moreover, despite

setbacks in constitutional refinement and fundamental political theories, its very nature as an "experiment" necessitates that the EU must refine itself quickly. As a result, education reform and the Bologna process itself may lead to unforeseen ramifications.

The United States and Isomorphism: Eastern Europe

Just as the European Union is a powerful isomorphic force in Eastern Europe, so too is the United States: as a democratic template, financial model and informational agent of democratization. The U.S. has a history of promoting democracy abroad, most notably with the implementation of the Marshall Plan. Before discussing American democratic promotion in post-Soviet Eastern Europe, a comprehensive review of democracy promotion precedent must be examined. As stated, starting with the Marshall Plan following WWII, the U.S. began promoting democracy globally. At first, democratic promotion became part of a foreign policy strategy to reduce the likelihood of future wars. By the end of the Cold War, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, opportunities arose for the United States to promote democracy in former Soviet territory. This opportunity—the exposure of many Eastern European countries to the choice between Soviet authoritarianism and Western liberal democracy—became a "policy window" (Kingdon, 2003) through which U.S. political and economic interests in Eastern Europe could be attained via partnerships with nascent democracies.

In this post-Soviet era, democratization became mixed with economic liberalization. This phenomenon led to what critic Barber (2003) considers "the spread of McWorld—that seductive compound of American commercialism, American consumerism and American brands" (p. 156). Democratic promotion lost some of its

61

benevolent nature because of this shift in foreign policy that placed U.S. interests at the center of international democratization within the context of globalization. Furthermore, flawed thinking created the notion that "exporting McWorld and globalizing markets is tantamount to forging free societies and a democratic world, [which] is a dangerous misconception likely to undermine prospective nation-building strategies" (Barber p. 168). In the long term, American democratic promotion in this current form negatively affects the development of new democracies because democracy does not appear to be the core of the effort. Worse, the inherent governmental instability of new democracies seems to exacerbate their inability to work cohesively to solve international issues.

A major institutional mechanism the U.S. government uses to promote democracy and other forms of "development is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Carothers, 1999). A study commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 1999), "using the most widely used measures of democracy," found that *USAID Democracy and Governance obligations have a significant positive impact on democracy, while all other US and non-US assistance variables are statistically insignificant*" (Finkel et al., 2006, p. 1).[8] These omitted variables biases may have elucidated each country's unique cultural and developmental characteristics. By omitting these critical variables, USAID seems to promote a one-size-fits-all type of democracy. Additionally, Finkel et al. (2006) report that "among eligible countries, democracy has been increasing steadily since 1990, but

---

[8] While USAID took institutional bias into account when conducting this study, the finding is not surprising because the researchers "controlled for both omitted variable bias as well as for the potential endogeneity of AID obligations" (p. 2).

that the gap between the advanced democracies and the developing democracies is still large" (p. 1).[9]

Isomorphism: A Summary

Overall, isomorphism as a force of institutional change is not wholly negative, if the purpose of the policies and the results of their implementation benefit the country in both the short- and long-term as opposed to creating a colony-like status. However, because isomorphism in Eastern Europe as framed in this study is an exogenous force, and one that arose when nascent democracies were making domestic policy decisions, the combination of these disparate phenomena may have compounded the negative effects due to poor coordination or incompatibility. As I will explain in a later section, Romania did not finish implementing its own domestic education reforms while at the same time it was trying to adhere to EU education reforms—the latter of which were not coordinated with Romania or other supporting international NGOs. Further, external institutional changes do not always take into account local context or culture, thereby potentially having a homogenizing effect on the countries in question. In the case of the EU and Romania, it seems that isomorphism represents a force that brought mostly positive changes for a country seeking to become a strong democracy and needing additional support because it lacked elite who were trained or experienced with democratization and democratic education.

---

[9] Despite the shortcomings of recent democratic promotion, USAID and the U.S. government it represents have an opportunity to improve their effectiveness in supporting international democratization. According to Thomas Carothers, a noted democracy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "U.S. democracy promotion is worth doing because when done well, it can work, [although] much of the time, it is not done well and fails" (USAID, 1999, p. 15).

Exogenous Forces Conclusion

      The coercive or mimetic forces inherent in U.S. or EU international influences are complex challenges for sustainable democratic transition in Eastern Europe as well as other regions in the world because of their complex impacts. Whether the EU or U.S. reforms their respective domestic or international policies, Romania contended with powerful exogenous forces as it transitions toward democracy. Fortunately, Romania has a source of stability: the strong sense of identity that was forged over thousands of years. Moreover, if Romania can incorporate a long-term perspective, i.e., fifty or one hundred years from now, it has the potential to avoid the pitfalls of moving from the grasp of one superpower to another, especially if its education system is to support the transition.

Context for Romanian Education

      To better understand how some of Romania's education system came to be, it is necessary to explore the context for its education reform. Although Eastern European countries share many characteristics, unique geographic and cultural attributes foster important differences. For example, the western portion of Eastern Europe shares borders with historically democratic Western Europe while the eastern portion of Eastern Europe shares borders with Russian-influenced countries like Moldova and Ukraine—geographic proximity creates a somewhat political gravitational pull of assimilation. In addition, each country is characterized and shaped by cultural, historical, linguistic and other unique characteristics. Moreover, while democratic transitions in the region began in the 1980's and culminated regionally in Eastern Europe in the 1989 dissolution of the USSR, the

trends, styles and goals of democratic transition differed from country to country. In addition, democracy incorporates the ideas of each home country and is not a cut-and-paste system of rule (Carothers, 1999). Thus, national transition differed from country to country due to the pace of transition and desired type of democracy, which means education policy is shaped by these factors, as I will discuss in subsequent sections.

Economic Reform and Political Economy of Romania

To this point in the study, the exploration of emerging forces and democratization has provided part of a foundational context for the subsequent chapter's foci on education. A final major point of consideration is economic reform and political economy. This section will explore the transitional component of the economy. After 1989, Romania had an opportunity to further distance itself from Soviet influence. Over time, the perpetual effort of brokering peace with more powerful countries, by force or by choice, seemingly forged Romania's culture and identity (Verdery, 1995). This constant fight for survival and legitimacy is what kept Romania from rising above the status of a periphery society. Therefore, Romania's economic past and foreseeable economic future is largely affected by the major powers with whom it must cooperate, including Russia in the east and the EU and United States in the west.

To better illustrate the political economy of Romania, it is useful to compare its economic transition to that of other countries in Eastern Europe. Table 1 shows two major groupings of post-communist countries. One group (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) have transitioned more quickly and consistently based on almost

every indicator in comparison to the second group (consisting of Balkan countries:

Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia).

Table 1: Comparative Measures

Comparative Measures for Selected Postcommunist Countries

	Index of Transition Progress[a]	Economic Freedom Index[b]	Country Risk Index[c]	Press Freedom Index[d]	Political Freedom Index[e]	Corruption Perception Index[f]
Czech Republic	36.0	2.20 (27)	60.19 (44)	20 (F)	3 (F)	4.3 (42)
Hungary	38.0	2.55 (42)	61.83 (42)	30 (F)	3 (F)	5.2 (32)
Poland	36.5	2.75 (54)	61.67 (43)	19 (F)	3 (F)	4.1 (43)
Slovenia	34.0	2.90 (63)	71.28 (32)	27 (F)	3 (F)	5.5 (28)
Albania	25.0	3.50 (110)	28.18 (146)	56 (PF)	9 (PF)	2.3 (84)*
Bulgaria	30.5	3.30 (95)	39.75 (84)	30 (F)	5 (F)	3.5 (52)
Croatia	32.5	3.45 (106)	47.8 (70)	63 (NF)	8 (PF)	3.7 (51)
Romania	29.5	3.65 (124)	33.80 (107)	44 (PF)	4 (F)	2.9 (68)
Slovakia	33.5	2.85 (59)	48.44 (66)	30 (F)	3 (F)	3.5 (52)
Belarus	16.0	4.25 (146)	29.11 (140)	80 (NF)	12 (NF)	4.1 (43)
Ukraine	26.0	3.85 (133)	29.96 (134)	39 (PF)	7 (PF)	2.6 (75)

[a] *Source*: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Transition Report, 2000* (London, 2001), 14, 34, and 36 (economic transition indicators are combined with legal transition indicators).
[b] *Source*: Gerald O'Driscoll Jr., Kim R. Holmes and Melanie Kirkpatrick, *2001 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2001). Lowest score 5.0, highest score 1.25. The index is composed of nine factors, including political risk, trade policy, taxation, government intervention in the economy, monetary policy, wage and price control, property rights, capital flows and foreign investment, banking, regulation and black market.
[c] *Source: Euromoney* (March 2000). Highest possible score 100.
[d] *Source:* Leonard R. Sussman, ed., *Press Freedom Survey, 2000* (New York: Freedom House, 2000). countries score 0-30 on 100-point scale are regarded as having a free press; countries scoreing 31-60 are partly free.
[e] *Source*: *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Liberties, 1999-2000* (New York: Freedom House, 2000). Highest possible score 2, lowest possible score 14.
[f] *Source:* Transparency International, 2000 Corruption Perception Index, available: http://www.transparency.de. This index is constructed as compilation of a number of surveys conducted in each country and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt). The score for Albania is from the 1999 index.

Inconsistent policy and too frequent market corrections for recessions in Bulgaria,

Albania and Romania in particular have destabilized the economies with their short-term

focus. Furthermore, in comparison to group one countries, "market reforms have been

less advanced, privatization lagged behind, and their legal and institutional infrastructure has been less developed and transparent…moreover, corruption has become a widespread phenomenon" (Ekiert, 2003, p. 96). Although Ekiert does not acknowledge the fact that group two countries chose to transition more slowly than their counterparts to the west, the following issues remain as a result of the inconsistency: "higher poverty rates, lower income, greater inequalities, and meager foreign capital inflows. [Furthermore], politics in these countries has been less predictable, reformist forces weaker, and the potential for a sudden crisis…much greater" (Ekiert, p. 96). Thus, given the history of the Balkan countries and Romania in particular, these data from Table 1 are not surprising because deeper challenges exist in comparison to the countries in group one based on instability and indicators that demonstrate the need for stability.

CHAPTER II PART II: EDUCATION, HISTORY AND REFORM

Introduction

As discussed in the previous section, forces such as the lingering effects of colonialism, the rise of globalization and the isomorphic pressures from institutions like the EU continued the legacy of volatility in the region. Moreover, all of these factors have a profound impact in the context for education reform in Eastern Europe. In this chapter, I will first discuss the context of education before and after 1989 in Eastern Europe and Romania. I will then discuss in greater detail the three distinct education reforms manifested after 1989: Article 32 of the Constitution, Education Act 84 and the Bologna Accords in 1999. I will focus heavily on Article 32 as it marked the literal and symbolic start to Romania's transition toward democracy. Moreover, while constitutions may not be perceived as the starting point for education policy, this Article was the only piece of education legislation that Romania had or created until Act 84, and will therefore be explored from various perspectives as a foundational moment in post-Soviet Romania.

Historical Context of Eastern Europe

A country's border creates a collective national identity within which many different groups of people must find commonalities and work towards peaceful coexistence. Many peaceful borders are dictated, in part, by natural geographic boundaries; the border between Romania and Bulgaria, for instance, is the Danube River. Other borders, which are frequent sources of conflict, are created solely as a result of

political decision-making and are often resolved by war, not diplomacy. Such constant change fosters regions of instability.

Sub-Context of Eastern Europe: The Balkans

Within Eastern Europe is a volatile geographic area known as the Balkan region, which has directly or indirectly impacted Romania for centuries. Although the Balkan region is encased within Eastern Europe, this region has additional unique challenges due to its history. The Balkan name came from a German geographer, Johann Zeune in 1808, who described the peninsular region of Southeast Europe as Balkan, which means "mountain" in Turkish (Glenny, 1999). This Turkish name is fitting because much of this area was under Ottoman Empire control until the latter 19th and early 20th centuries. However, this mountain range does not reach throughout the entire region, as Zeune originally believed. Instead of reaching from the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea, the Balkan Mountain range begins and ends within modern-day Bulgaria. Despite this mistake by Zeune, the name *Balkan* often refers to the countries of Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Greece; Macedonia; Montenegro; Serbia; and Turkey as well as to Romania (Glenny, 1999, p. xxii).[10]

Balkan countries have faced a multitude of border changes to a point where, over the past 100 years, maps have officially changed approximately nine times, and current borders are seen by some as temporary solutions to long term colonial fallout (http://www.bbc.com). Lingering challenges of identity trace back to past world superpowers such as the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire and

---

[10] Kosovo is now recognized by 69 countries as a sovereign country within this region.

the Soviet Empire, all who colonized various areas within the region. This colonization and re-colonization creates both a geographic and cultural crossroads between the East and West. These major empires also fought for control over this area and, in the process, divided populations within the region. Some citizens in the Balkans converted to the Muslim faith (Albanians) to become outposts for the Ottoman Empire, while others remained Christian Orthodox or Catholic, the latter resulting from ties to Roman occupation.

Although religious conversions allowed for the brokering of temporary peace upon becoming suzerainties in many cases, religious decisions added further complication to the region as it divided the people in ways not reflected in the borders of their respective countries. As the Ottoman Empire lost control and supremacy in the region, various factions began to revolt. For example, the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 was a major turning point in the region as Serbia, Montenegro and Romania became independent while Bulgaria remained a principality to the Sultan (Mowat, 1915). This treaty was the first step for the Balkan region's independence from colonial influence, notwithstanding Soviet colonization, which stalled the progress toward independence until the latter part of the 20th century.

Over the next 100 years after the Treaty of Berlin, many changes occurred within the region. These changes were often sparked by exogenous influences. For example, when Franz Ferdinand of the Austria-Hungarian Empire visited Sarajevo in 1914 to quell disputes between the Bosnians and the Serbians, he was assassinated by a Serbian—an event that sparked World War I. If a cataclysmic event such as this pulls all contemporary regional superpowers into a war, clearly the Balkan region is of special interest to the

region and world at large. Furthermore, exogenous forces that surround the Balkans, as well as Eastern Europe as a whole, continue to play a major role in the development of culture, government and education.

Further challenges ensued following the end of World War I. Between WWI and WWII, Croatian fascists allowed Germans to economically profit from this transient alliance. Resultantly, the region also experienced further fragmentation and border change due to German exploitation of regional resources (Glenny, 1999). Following WWII, an authoritarian system of communism took hold and, until about 1992, tens of thousands lost their lives due to war, forced labor and concentration camps (Glenny, 1999). Because of such tragic factors, authoritative communism contributed to additional challenges which the Balkan region would have to reconcile in the 20th and 21st centuries in government, education and culture.

Communist Education: Education as Indoctrination, 1947-1989

As with any country, Romania's system of education influences, to varying degrees, the ideological and intellectual growth of the citizenry. This influence can be manipulated for political ends to the detriment of student learning or vocational choice. For example, before 1989, "Romanian higher education was highly politicised, centralised, and planned. Its political character was reflected in the fact that, as a rule, all academics had to be members of the Communist Party" (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 91). Specifically, governmental theories outlined in Marx's writings, which were the reported backbone of the Communist movement in Romania, were never fully implemented because of the manifestation of a totalitarian regime. Because President

Nicolae Ceauşescu became a dictator, the government model outlined by Marx as one that exists only to protect the "*rights of man*" was never realized by the Romanian Communist Party (Tucker, 1978, p. 44). As a result of this Stalinist (or totalitarian) form of communism, intellectual innovation and creativity were limited from the start.[11]

This centralized communist government took hold in the 1950's and lasted until 1989. During this time, communist leaders running the countries were, according to Tismaneanu, "not merely nationalists. They were first and foremost Stalinists, as shown by their peculiarly Stalinist hostility to any form of private property and the decision to complete the collectivization of agriculture against all odds" (Tismaneanu, 2003, p. 35). Therefore, higher education was creating model communist leaders and contributors to the communist economy, which placed education as a critically important component of sustaining communism.

In primary and secondary education, curriculum was Soviet-inspired with the goal of creating "highly skilled" workers who could contribute to the maintenance of the communist system. Schools were divided into "primary (grades I to IV)…gymnasium education (grades V to VIII) and lyceum [secondary] or vocational education," the latter depending on the student's performance (Georgescu, 1997, p. 17). Later, gymnasium education was extended to grade ten and, as with higher education, completely controlled centrally by the state, with no private or religious education permitted. A nation-wide examination determined which students went to technical or apprenticeship schools and

---

[11] While plausible that communism as a form of government also restricts innovation and creativity in any form, the focus in this case is on the Stalinist communism, which led to totalitarianism.

which went to the lyceum. Schools were designed to create strong contributors to and participants of the communist regime, while simultaneously restricting "the role of intellectuals in society" (Georgescu, 1997, p. 19). Therefore, to determine the quality of schooling in Romania during this time is quite challenging since compulsory ten-year general education guaranteed passage through secondary school, so all statistics reflect a 100% completion rate, which will be explored in the interviews. Furthermore, schools, universities and the Ministry of Science and Education falsified statistics to maintain the false impression that Romania had superior education in comparison to Western countries (Georgescu, 1997), when, observationally and based on my original research, the results seem to indicate poorer quality.

Although education quality in Romania is unclear, students who attended elementary, secondary and tertiary education under Romanian Communist Party (RCP) received free schooling, albeit fraught with indoctrination and censored information. In primary and secondary school, for example, students were taught citizen education, social etiquette, political education, Romanian literature consisting of poems dedicated to the RCP, geography lessons that touted the RCP's leadership toward Romanian economic independence and philosophy classes that praised the RCP's ability to contribute to the Marxist movement (IEA, 1999). Based on conversations with Romanian immigrants to the U.S. and during informal conversations with Romanians in Bucharest, the content of the curriculum and school climate attempted to create a pro-government mentality of subservience which limited individual volition. Thus, it was not Marxist philosophy oppressing the student population but instead an abuse of Marxist philosophy that characterized the Romanian education system from 1948 under Gheorghiu-Dej and, to a

greater extent, Nicolae Ceauşescu from 1965 to 1989. To date, an insubstantial amount of information on Romania's education system during this system exists, and as observed based on conversations with many Romanians, there is not a desire to spend time studying this period, but instead a desire to look forward.

Lack of Trust

Additional influences under Ceauşescu have affected education policy and the freedom of ideas by creating an aura of distrust. The impact of the Securitate (Secret Police), for example, warrants attention. This Securitate was a major system of control employed by the government to ensure order and political consensus. By 1989, when Nicolae Ceauşescu and his wife Elena were executed for their role in the genocide against their own citizenry and their work against the national economic interests, the Securitate was both strong in number and influential (Behr, 1991). According to Glenny, the Securitate employed "24,000 active service officers. But its foot soldiers were the tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of informers who reported on the activities of citizens in every nook and cranny of society" (1999, p. 604). This oppressive force did more than gather information. The Securitate also used "prisons psychiatric units and torture sessions…[in addition to] the certainty that one of your close friends or family was informing on you, contributing to the detailed files that the Securitate opened on every citizen" (Glenny, 1999, p. 604). These tragic conditions, , under which an estimated 60,000 citizens were worked to death in labor camps during Ceauşescu's 30-year rule, coupled with the constant terror yielded an environment where lack of public trust undermined government reform.

Consequently, significant changes were necessary for healing and foundation-building for this nation of 22 million people. The Securitate and Ceauşescu's effects on the country are both deep and wide-reaching. However, with the absence of these two terrors, potential exists within Romanian institutions such as education to build upon strengths while identifying and resolving challenges.

Transition: Education Reform in Romania—1989 to 2007

As discussed, education comprising all levels in a democracy is a crucial component of national stability, economic prosperity, rule of law, character refinement and civic participation; thus, the education system is crucial to the short- and long-term success of a democratic country (Smolar, 2002). Furthermore, democratic education can increase the likelihood of continued democratization by "securing direction and development" of the country in question (Dewey, 1921, p. 94). For example, by teaching students about rules, laws, participatory activities in government and volunteer life, the constitution and how to become empowered as a citizen, democratic education can maintain and develop successful democracies. The goal of democratic education is met when citizens can competently and responsibly participate by understanding and valuing democratic principles with the ability to use them in practice (Bahmueller, 1991). The challenge, however, is that in striving toward these ambitious goals, opportunity costs manifest during transitions.

In Romania's transition, one of the costs pertained to the role of education in its functional ability to support democracy. For example, democratic education do not seem to be fully integrated into Romania's school system perhaps because democratic

education reform is a lesser priority in comparison to economic and political reform because of the Romanian predisposition to focus on the theoretical, not the practical (Freyberg-Inan, 2001). Furthermore, based on her case study, "Romanian students remain a reflection, rather than becoming an engine, of their country's evolution" (Freyberg-Inan, 2001, p. 103).

In the short-term, stability and economic sustainability are fundamental to a country. However, to ensure stabilization, education can also be reformed while longer-term plans are crafted and refined. In the Romanian case, education reform was not wholly addressed in law until 1995, which is why students can be characterized as a "reflection" of its past as Freyberg-Inan noted, instead of an engine that drives and supports democratic change; because little changed, systemically, norms of social reproduction largely continued, status quo.

Romanian Education Reform: Challenges

At first glance, transition towards democracy may seem wholly good since it marks movement away from oppressive forms of government. However, this transition is not without its challenges, and shallow attempts at progress can create setbacks that may cause some of the citizenry to grow weary with the democratic government. For example, after 1989, Romanian national scores in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) declined and did not start rebounding until 2001. Although test scores cannot wholly represent whether quality instruction takes place, nor can they accurately reflect student knowledge, test scores are an especially good approximation when working with a closed

society that lacks other indices of performance measures, and their decline was

disheartening for the Romanian people.[12]

In post-coup Romania, when comparing Romanian test results on PISA and

TIMSS with most countries of Eastern Europe, Romania has fared among the worst

during its time of reform.[13] Quantitatively, data from the International Association for the

Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) show that Romania underperforms

compared to almost every country in the study, even bordering countries. The legitimacy

and quality of the IEA Civic Education Study is crucial to this claim.[14]

One possible reason may be the immense challenge of reforming after facing the severity

of the Ceauşescu regime and exogenous pressures with which it contended. Moreover, it

is possible that the education system was never as strong as once believed in Romania

because so much effort was placed into ideology and the narrowing of the curriculum,

with a heavy value of urban areas. This question will be explored within the original

research portion of this case study. For the purpose of contextualization, however, I will

---

[12] When comparing Romania to other countries, there is a historical precedent of skewing their domestic qualitative results and using propagandist language that severely decreases the legitimacy and validity of scoring. Moreover, the Ministry would also work to ensure that those who may not perform as well on the examinations were omitted from taking them in the first place, such as special needs children, thereby skewing results.

[13] Based on the most recent results available in 2009.

[14] Justifiably, the IEA is the largest and most rigorous study of civic education ever conducted internationally. This research tested and surveyed nationally representative samples consisting of 90,000 14-year-old students in 28 countries, and 50,000 17- to 19-year-old students in 16 countries throughout 1999 and 2000. Questionnaires were also administered to teachers and school principals. The content domains covered in the instrument were identified through national case studies during 1996-1997 and included democracy, national identity, and social cohesion and diversity. The engagement of youth in civil society was also a focus" (www.iea.org).

now discuss major challenges that have affected and continue to affect Romania as it

transitions toward democracy and sovereignty.

Romanian Education System Today: An Overview

The Romanian K-16 education system has undergone many legislative

reforms, but its overall curriculum, pedagogical practices and norms have not changed

dramatically since the Soviet era.[15] In fact, the overall system that predates 1989 still

exists in its general form (Georgescu, 1997). Figure 6 illustrates the form of the

Romanian system:

---

[15] During the Soviet Era, the system comprised a French and German hybrid system
that was borrowed during Romania's monarchial times in the early 1900's and was
later modified by the Soviets into a Soviet-style curricula and teaching methodology.
This fact will be explored during chapters four and five when analyzing and reporting on
the interviews.

Figure 6: The Education System in Romania
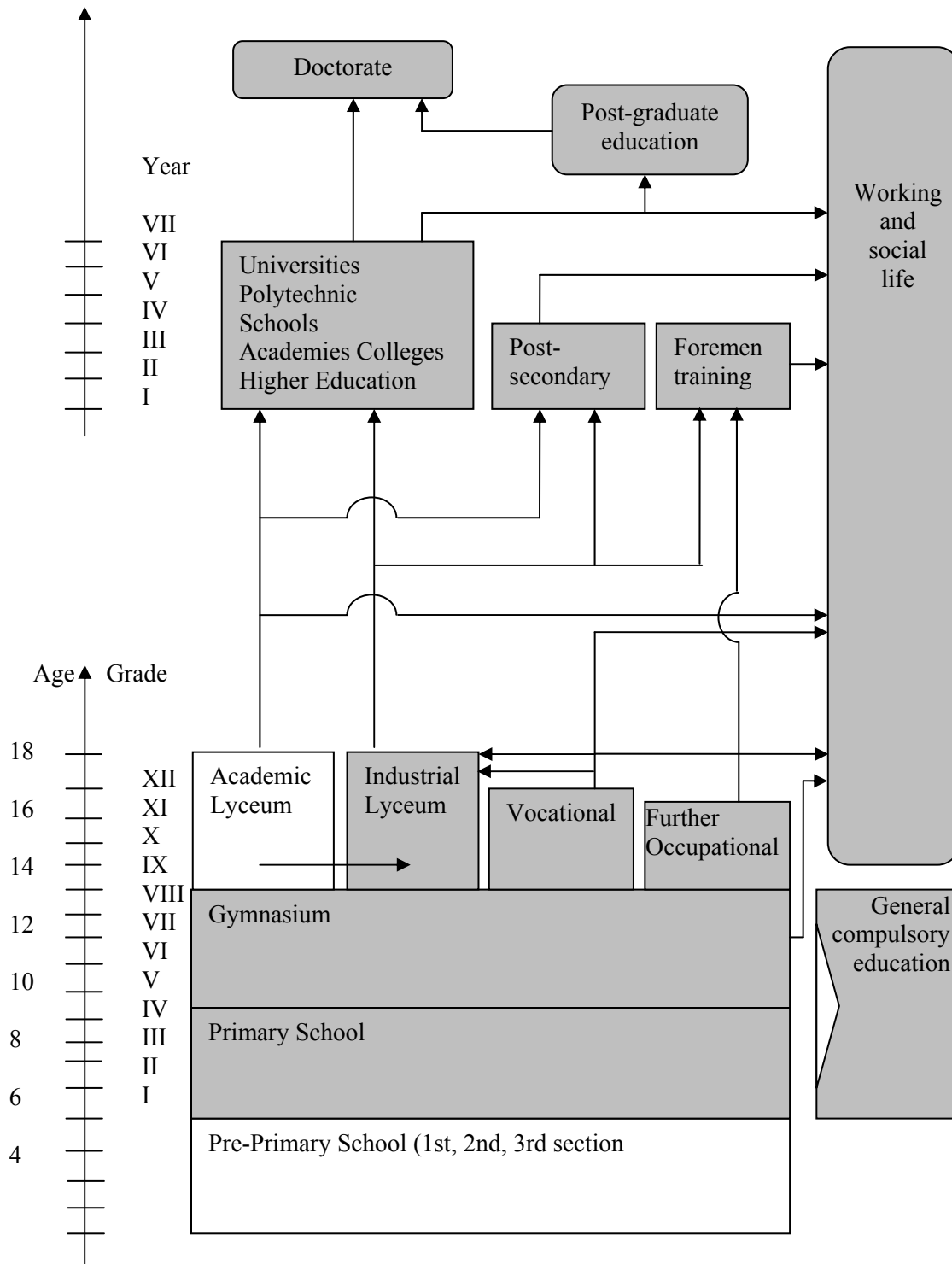
One challenge relates to the decision Romanian elites made regarding the pace of transition and their decision to follow perestroika. The second challenge is that decentralization requires locals outside of Bucharest, the capital and center of government, who can skillfully assume additional responsibilities. Such challenges will be explored in great detail in subsequent sections. Given the ideology of the leadership that spanned over so many decades, one can understand better the reason behind collectivist inertia and fear of the free market and privatization. Moreover, for Romania to adopt these "Western" ideologies was a radical departure from historical precedent with the exception of some elements incorporating aspects of French culture. Furthermore, Tismaneanu explains, "many of these themes and phobias predate communism…makes the Romanian case even more puzzling and theoretically challenging in its political-cultural syncretism" (Tismaneanu, 2003, p. 253). Moreover, as a consequence of totalitarianism, most of the population was accustomed to submissive roles; undertaking additional responsibilities was a foreign concept (Fryberg-Inan, 2001). An additional challenge exists in that over half of the population resides in urban areas, with small pockets of rural populations spread out over the entire country. Therefore, any legislative changes may impact more quickly the urban settings and slowly disseminate to the rural areas. Lastly, because most of the education leaders and general population operate under the assumption that the Romanian school system was better than most education systems in the West, a lingering resistance exists to implement or change too much due to this domestic misperception (Fryberg-Inan, 2001).

Finally, recent Romanian education legislation only continues the process of decentralization (now 80% state and 20% local) as an attempt to implement Bologna

Process demands, the result of which is a theoretical trickle-down effect on primary and secondary education without guaranteeing the empowerment of the citizen (Fiszbein, 2001). For a student to be prepared for a "Bologna" University, however, he or she must have passed through an education system that adequately educated that student with a broader, liberal arts background. Unfortunately, until future studies are conducted to assess progress of reform implementation, it is challenging to determine the current quality of Romanian education as of January 1, 2007. Furthermore, teacher education, principal training, school accreditation, along with democratic curricular reform seems to lack adequate policy implementation, and largely remains "ad hoc" (OECD, 2001). To better understand these emerging concepts, the following sections will explore various laws and policies to cultivate a frame of reference.

History: Education Reform and the Romanian Constitution

The first of three major components of education reform in Romania was its Constitution. Within the Romanian Constitution is Article 32, which is a brief but powerful policy that outlines briefly changes to the education system. However, it contains little or no detail about implementation and was not accompanied by a policy to guide implementation. Despite its brevity, as part of the new Constitution, Article 32 was the product of a "policy window," a concept that can be defined in this case as an opportunity that allowed for major changes in the education system in Romania (Kingdon, 2003, p. 165). Specifically, Article 32 of the Romanian Constitution of 1991, stated

(1) The right to education is provided by the compulsory[16] general education, by education in high schools and vocational schools, by higher education, as well as other forms of instruction and postgraduate improvement.

(2) Education at all levels shall be carried out in Romanian. Education may also be carried out in a foreign language of international use, under the terms laid down by law.

(3) The right of persons belonging to national minorities to learn their mother tongue, and their right to be educated in this language are guaranteed; the ways to exercise these rights shall be regulated by law.

(4) State education shall be free, according to the law. The State shall grant social scholarships to children or young people coming from disadvantaged families and to those institutionalized, as stipulated by the law.

(5) Education at all levels shall take place in state, private, or confessional institutions, according to the law.

(6) The autonomy of the Universities is guaranteed.

(7) The State shall ensure the freedom of religious education, in accordance with the specific requirements of each religious [group]. In public schools, religious education is organized and guaranteed by law (Romanian Constitution, 1991).

All aspects of this Article are the same as what was purportedly guaranteed under communism with two exceptions: private provision of schooling and university autonomy. However, by permitting the existence of private education and university

---

[16] 1st through 8th grade [not kindergarten or 9th grade, onward].

autonomy, the policy fundamentally alters the potential makeup of the Romanian education system. Prior to Article 32, religious or private education institutions in Romania were forbidden and universities were not autonomous. Therefore, this policy allows for an opportunity to reform education in Romania in a way never before permissible by statute.

While not detailed, Article 32 created an opportunity to "bring about a major, permanent change in the functional ability" of Romanian education to address the educational responsibilities in a newly formed democratic government (Fowler, 2000, p. 253). Whereas pre-constitution policy made all aspects of K-16 education centralized and state run, Article 32 allowed for private secular or religious schools and higher education institutions. This opportunity seemingly created an alternative engine to support the reforms of education, especially since autonomy would be employed—the firm, Stalinist hand would not withhold intellectual freedoms as during the communist era. Furthermore, a group of citizens could, for example, create a private education institution, whether religious or secular in nature, that could better serve local or regional interests. However, the efforts necessary to implement changes permitted by Article 32 required individual actors in conjunction with the nascent government to take advantage of this new policy shift. As a result, this policy can be characterized as powerful in what it permits but weak in the support it provides for implementation.

Strategically, Article 32 handled the "public problem" of demonstrating reform as expected in a newly founded democracy by displaying a major value shift in how education could take shape (Fowler, 2000, p. 9). Although it does not comply fully with the definition of a mandate, Article 32 appears to govern the "action of individuals and

agencies" because of the profound shift in the forms of educational intuitions that could be created (Elmore & Sykes, 1992, p. 191). Because Article 32 expanded how educational institutions can be manifested due to the shift in values, this policy is hortatory; that is, it urges action by implying that reform is now in the hands of citizens if they desire to have alternatives to public education.

Although an inducement policy may have provided more substance through detailed provisions about funding and implementation, Article 32 as a hortatory policy also lacks specific direction. The policy does not articulate any provisions for accreditation, funding support, compatibility with public institutions, or even language of instruction. Because the type of institutions this policy permits were new to Romanian education, clearer guidance regarding the above mentioned issues would have provided better support for their relationship with the government to ensure accountability. Article 32 is therefore an inadequate policy because although it articulates and legitimizes value shifts, it lacks the financial and strategic skeleton upon which a newly formed government should base education reform (Elmore & Sykes, 1992, p. 188).

Vague Characteristics of Article 32: Missing Factors

One important aspect of education reform is curriculum, because of its role in providing content for instruction. This content can reflect desired skills and values that the institution intends to impart to the students. Not surprisingly, due to its status as an article in a constitution, Article 32 does not provide any guidance with regard to curriculum reform, content or focus. This lack of specificity may have provided the flexibility in curriculum that some students and teachers desired until a clearer framework

was employed to carry out what the Article may have represented. Furthermore, Article 32 did not indicate how public schooling itself should be reformed. No demonstrable reform is indicated in Article 32 on the topic of public schooling or anywhere else in the Romanian Constitution; since private or religious schools define themselves in relation to public schools, this lack of reform has significant ramifications for all types of Romanian education. Therefore, despite this freedom in instructor content, there are no boundaries for how the Article can be implemented or the extent to which private or religious institutions can differ from public institutions (Elmore & Sykes, 1992). Thus, legitimacy and comparability to public schooling is challenging and, as a result, possibly damaging to the private schools that cannot increase enrollment by differentiating themselves sufficiently from the public schools.

Importance of Article 32

Despite the vague nature of Article 32, it is certainly a revolutionary shift in policy direction with regard to Romanian education. Because of the instability of the political culture during its writing, perhaps only a vague and brief policy that demonstrated a shift in values could be created. Without further direction and follow-up regarding accreditation, curriculum, compatibility with public institutions and language of instruction, Article 32 remains a policy that is powerful in terms of the changes it permits but weak with regard to provisions for implementation.

To implement changes that would avoid the potential for another dictatorship and influence from Russia, the Romanian educational system followed the models of Western Europe and the United States based on interviews I conducted in March of

2009. This action of adopting Western economic and political theories would garner the economic and political interests of these countries. Unlike some of Romania's neighbors such as the Czech Republic and Poland, who did not experience violent revolutions, Romania had more challenging issues to tackle. The violence resulting in uncertain numbers of deaths, injuries and imprisonments of their coup may have represented the discord among citizens and political elite with regard to how the country would move forward. Thus, those with power would be the ones who initially had a larger effect on education reform since many politicians retained positions prior to, and following, the coup of 1989 and the creation of the new government (Birzea, 1996). Therefore, perhaps the lack of clarity allowed for public education to continue without significant changes until the government gained a stronger foothold and legitimacy with the people.

Article 32 Viewed from the Symbolic Lens

Until the creation of Article 32, education was seen as not only a public good, but also a government run agency. The *symbol* of permissible privatized education created an opportunity for the entire higher education system in particular to seemingly improve by appearing more dynamic and modern. Here, modern is not defined as incessant permanent progress but rather as growth that is relevant and applicable to the free-market economy Romania sought to embrace. Also, the symbol of private higher education reflected a change the country wished to pursue. Although proud of its heritage and culture, the people of Romania were ready for change, as evidenced by the coup of 1989. The coup was an opportunity for "[c]ultural analysis—the explicit attention to the

meanings and symbols that guide the construction of categories and shape the use of language—provides a window on the otherwise concealed or unquestioned aspects of policy formation and implementation" (Stein, 2004, p. ix.). Thus, the symbolism of education policy had to reflect the cultural shift the Romanian population sought through political reform. Private higher education, in the U.S., is not necessarily seen as a *better* alternative to public higher education but rather a symbol of *choice.* Having a choice means having the freedom to choose a course of action despite the obstacles of user fees and logistics regarding the university's proximity to a student's home. One obstacle the Romanian government contended with was the perception that its work is complete with regard to education reform. It is possible that "[t]he danger of celebrating a symbol is that it can lead to a sense of self satisfaction and an unwillingness to examine practice" (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 207). Thus, the symbolic perspective of this policy displays its powerful impact on schooling and democratization.

<div align="center">**European Union and the Hope for Stability**</div>

Following Article 32 and various reforms commensurate with that policy and the Constitution as a whole, Romania, like other Eastern European countries, had an opportunity to apply for EU accession. To become part of the EU and thus gain the financial and diplomatic benefits of membership, a country must undergo various changes ranging from increased political transparency to economic reform. EU membership may also require the establishment of country-specific policies: Romania, for instance, has taken steps to permit ethnic Hungarians in the northwest portion of the country to teach in their native language without compromising their role as Romanian

citizens. Romania (and Bulgaria) overcame some of these obstacles and gained entry on January 1, 2007. Although this success may indicate that the challenging work of reform is complete, both countries still remain in transition due to the monumental reforms mandated by the EU which require, for continued membership, implementation (http://www.europa.eu). For these nations, entry into the EU was not the endpoint of transition.

Anticipating the Bologna Process: Romanian Education Act 84 of 1995

In anticipation of the EU requirements for accession, Romania passed its Education Act 84 of 1995, which was "the first post-communist education law in Romania" (Birzea, 1996, p. 105). This Act stated that Romanian education would be

> a national priority, the focusing on a democratic, open and humanistic educational ideal, equal chances of access to education for all the citizens of Romania, the tax free status of state sponsored education… and the granting of university autonomy and the accepting of alternative systems in the organization of education (Romanian National Report, 2001, p. 3).

The Education Act of 1995 took the open-ended nature of Article 32 and made explicit the interests of the Romanian government and future reform. Although it echoes Article 32 with regard to university autonomy and private provision of schooling and higher education, the Act states that education will be a national priority that focuses on a democratic, open and educational ideal (Romania National Report, 2001). Previously, education policy did not focus specifically on democracy, but represented democratic reform by deleting communist rhetoric from the

curriculum. Much of what the Act did for education in Romania will be explored

during the interviews I conducted, as literature is sparse on this subject.

Challenges to Democratic Reform in Romania

Cultural Mindset

Despite Act 84 as a clear education policy, albeit top-down and centrally

created, challenges remained that blocked swift implementation. For example, before

the Romanian coup of 1989, "[i]nitiative had no place in such a system and people at

all levels were used to following instructions and pre-set rules. The better you followed

the rules, the better academic you were" (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 91). Therefore, one

aspect of Romanian democratization necessitated a paradigm shift that embraced

innovative and intellectual freedom. Because the new government adopted relatively

unfamiliar models—democracy and the free-market economic system, respectively—

to guide the government and economy, innovation, dedication and challenging

decisions would be needed to support the inherent changes that would occur.

Moreover, individual responsibility and independent thought would need to become a

core characteristic of the new Romania.

Beyond Act 84: Additional Insight into Romanian Reform Context

Education researcher and professor Luminita Nicolescu provided a critical

perspective on Romanian reforms in the mid to late 1990's. Because information and

research are sparse in terms of literature on the topic of elementary and secondary

education, much of her work, like this study, explored higher education. In her 2002

article, "Reforming Higher Education in Romania," Nicolescu spoke of the inherent need for education to reform before the political and economic forces can change. She observed that

> Central and Eastern European countries, and amongst them Romania, have an even greater need to have educational systems that can help their transition to market economies. Education systems in these countries must transform old, egalitarian and passive working mentalities into active, competition-based and responsibility-taking mentalities, which are the basis of market-driven societies (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 91).

Nicolescu was not writing that education reform guarantees or is even an indicator of economic success in the new free market despite its progress with democratization. She was, however, expressing that a political change must be sustained by thoughtful, long-term educational solutions that focus on teaching students about democracy *and* the free-market. With new concepts of competition and entrepreneurship, universities must also prepare students to be catalysts for change, themselves, instead of relying on government guidance, as was the common under the authoritarian regime.

According to Nicolescu, the number of students who attended tertiary education institutions increased by a factor of 2.5 times between 1990 and 1999 as a result of the new constitution and new political system (Nicolescu, 2002). Furthermore, the number of public higher education institutions increased from 42 in 1970 to 111 in 1999 (Nicolescu, 2002). The demand for tertiary schooling overwhelmed what the public institutions could offer. This opportunity allowed for private higher education to fill the void and have a chance at sustaining themselves

due to market demand. During this time, private higher education institutions increased from zero in 1989 to 54 in 1999 (Nicolescu, 2002). This increase in private higher education is evidence that Article 32 and Act 84 allowed for desired educational alternatives for the citizens of Romania.

However, in the short-term, the increase in schools alone did not necessarily increase civic knowledge, democratic participation or economic progress. Based on her qualitative research, Nicolescu writes that

> modernisation, structural and systemic reforms were also needed. [In addition,] modernisation reforms (changes in curricula, textbooks, teaching methods), as well as structural reforms (legal and managerial issues) were beginning, while the systemic reforms meant to change the inner logic of the system were not pursued at all (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 92).

Private schools initially copied public school curricula and management practices because of a lack of funding or ability to create alternative curricula. However, over time private universities became more independent because they gained financial independence and experienced the autonomy from government control inherent in private education (Nicolescu, 2002).

Although university autonomy does not necessarily guarantee quality instruction, it certainly affords demonstrable freedoms the public desired. For example, Nicolescu writes that,

> [u]niversity autonomy is also supposed to induce qualitative improvements in teaching and research and strengthen the links of universities with the

communities of which they are part, thus contributing to the fulfillment of the other objectives of the reform (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 95).

During education reform, some private higher education institutions were able to be constructed in locations not inhabited by public universities. Many of these private universities also located themselves in urban areas. One such example is Hyperion University, located in Bucharest, which focused its mission on humanities, economics, technical skills and justice (http://www.hyperion.ro). If university autonomy did not exist, Hyperion University would be beholden to what the Romanian government mandated as core subject areas. Without this effort, Romania would not have other institutions with which to build this sense of community or instruct citizens about new democratic processes because, up until the coup of 1989, there were no institutions of this kind. To better understand the post-coup relationship between politicians and education, it is crucial to evaluate Ion Iliescu. Part of his course of action encompassed education as a priority for Romania. In his article "Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century and its Role in the Advancement of Romania," Iliescu writes about the larger context of universities in Romania with regard to political or economic progression: "[i]n the knowledge society that is developing today, universities have a major responsibility. They must affirm themselves as constructive, knowledge-generating organizations, as well as educators of responsible and competent citizens" (Iliescu, 2003, p. 14).

In this statement, Iliescu acknowledges the importance of universities and their effect on citizenship development. Although this same point could be said for the time during communist rule and that period's desired citizen type, in the context of transition

toward democracy and a free-market economy, Iliescu alludes to the changing times for

Romania. Furthermore, to better contend with the force of globalization, Iliescu saw

education as a potential way to directly confront international changes and trends for the

benefit of Romania. Iliescu writes that "it is in this very context that a system of

education is needed, at the core of which are quality services and professionalization, and

to which the unlimited access of young people is made possible" (Iliescu, 2003, p. 15).

Private education can complement the public schooling system as an alternative and forge

some of the changes Iliescu discussed because they would be newly created in a different

format. The focus on the university as a guiding light of reform echoes the EU's

emphasis on top down reform via the Bologna Process. This perspective illuminates why

primary and secondary education reforms were, and still are, slow in comparison to

higher education.

Additional educational challenges persisted in the conflict between what the

government wanted with regard to education reform and what Iliescu and his

government produced. This disjuncture pertained to the speed of reform. Cesar

Birzea, a nationally respected Romanian educator, wrote that "[t]he students and

pupils, the main actors of the events of December 1989, wanted rapid and substantial

reforms, especially in the field of education" (Birzea, 1996, p. 98). As principal

figures in the events of 1989, students had a vested interest in seeing change in not

only daily life with regard to civic freedoms, but also with regard to school reform.

Despite student interest, the government decided rapid changes were risky in that

sweeping changes could undermine social order and potentially, political stability.

Specifically, Birzea argues that politicians

[…] quickly understood that the key factors of power in the new context are no longer of an ideological and military nature, but are under the direct control of the decision-making process. That is why the attention of the old political class focused upon the three important pillars of modern society: *property, information,* and *education* (Birzea, 1996, p. 98).

Since the pillar of public education was already in place, Iliescu's government did not need an education revolution as much as an education evolution that would reflect the country's nascent democracy.

Conclusion: Romanian Education Today

Although the period covered by my case study ends on January 1, 2007, an extended literature review suggests that little research exists on any reforms or changes in Romanian education since 2001.[17] Until such studies are undertaken, and until new reforms focus significantly on implementation, the extent to which Romanian education has changed or will change is unclear. However, this finding is not overly surprising given the characteristics of Romanian transition at its core: intentionally slow.

In conclusion, I have provided a brief overview of the profound importance of the geopolitical context and historical precedent on transitional democracies like Romania. To understand the complex and challenging task of transitioning toward democracy necessitates additional exploration into the perspective of the Romanian education bureaucrats who impacted or now impact education reform in Romania. From the foundation of this literature review, and to fill the gaps that have emerged, interviews

---

[17] Insufficient literature may be due to: a) few reforms since 2001 and/or b) reform has occurred, but there has been little research since 2001.

95

with Romanian education bureaucrats were necessary to identify and better understand the transition toward democracy from their perspective. Moreover, these interviews provided evidence for additional complexities that must be considered with regard to education in transitional democracies. The following section will outline the methodology for my interviews and will explore how the interview findings may further explore emerging themes surrounding Romania's transition and the context for education reform.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: OVERALL APPROACH AND

RATIONALE

Research Methods: Overall Approach and Rationale

Accessing the elements behind education decision-making in transitional

Romania necessitates a study into what and how, as well as why, decisions were made,

which in turn requires understanding context without applying judgment or negative

criticism. A purely quantitative analysis would explore only the *what* of the events that

unfolded as opposed to a qualitative analysis, which discusses the *how* and *why* of events.

Of all the qualitative methods available for my study of Romanian education, the best

method was one that allowed me to explore a bounded period of time without

diminishing the perspectives of the bureaucratic education elites or the documents they

created: this method is a case study. In the next section, I will explore qualitative

methodology and, specifically, case study methodology.

This case study sought to answer two key questions:

(1) What factors impacted Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime

toward democracy?

(2) What role did education play in Romania's transition from a totalitarian

regime toward democracy?

To support this analysis, I reviewed relevant quantitative studies from the IEA, PISA and

TIMSS, for example, to supplement my qualitative analysis because they provided an

overview of Romania's transition. To provide a contextual framework for the interview

data for the purpose of triangulation, I conducted a thorough literature review and

document (policy) analysis, both of which were explored in Chapter II. Finally, although I primarily focused on the time period after the Romanian coup d'état of 1989, I did not limit relevant information that may pre-date that time marker.

Characteristics of This Study

To explore education's role and the forces impacting Romania during its transition from totalitarianism toward democracy, I selected the approach of qualitative research methodology. Such a methodology encompasses several characteristics that seemed valuable to what I desired to study: 1) natural setting (field focused) as source of data; 2) researcher as key instrument of data collection; 3) data collected as words; 4) outcome as process rather than product; 5) analysis of data inductively, attention to particulars; 6) focus on participants' perspectives, their meaning; 6) use of expressive language; 7) and persuasion by reason (Creswell, 1998, p. 16). In short, this form of methodology was essential to answering my two research questions, especially because I wanted to emphasize the perspective of the interviewees. Participant perspective is a component that quantitative methodology could undermine because the two traditions differ on three main levels: the difference between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry; the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher; and a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (Stake, 1995).

Because I desired to explore Romania's transition to discover gaps in the literature, the qualitative tradition naturally fit these expectations as a quantitative study may not have allowed for the narrative of the interviews. Moreover, because the

questions and collected data comprise an exploratory study, a rigid quantitative

framework was not plausible.

Interviewing was a particularly important method of data collection because of

the premise that to explore this transition, I understood that "much of what we cannot

observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others" (Stake, 1995, p. 64).

Moreover, "the interview is the main road to multiple realities" (p. 64).

After selecting qualitative methodology, I had to determine my philosophical

assumptions to answer the research questions before selecting which tradition of

qualitative methodology: ethnography, biography, phenomenology, grounded theory and

case study. From Creswell's (1998) rubric, the following Table 3 explains the

philosophical backdrop for this study:

Table 3: Philosophical Assumptions with Implications[18]

Ontological	I will address ontological issues by interviewing Romanian elites who may provide additional information about the democratic transition as well as costs and challenges to the transition. This information may help challenge the reality set forth by researchers, who have their own bias.
Epistemological	I have a connection to Romanian culture due to Romanian ancestry, religion and marriage. That connection is multiplied by having family relatives in Romania. I see myself as both part of the people and an outsider—and I am that much more connected as a result.
Axiological	I wish to understand Romanian government values to see some of the reasons why and how decisions were made regarding education policy. I am curious, but cannot study extensively, that relationship in comparison with the values of the populace.
Rhetorical	I will carefully choose words I write because I know my study may be translated and possibly used by Romanians. What I write is therefore doubly important. In addition, I will pay attention to words used by those whom I interview and will carefully translate when necessary to capture tone and original meaning.
Methodological	My goal is to be fluid and flexible in terms of conclusions or expected observations. Because my study will be emergent, I also want a strong enough foundation. So, I will have a strong literature review and introduction that will leave room for how the interviews and my experiences in the field can affect what I ultimately write as a conclusion.

Based on the philosophical foundation, I was able to select case study methodology from

the five main traditions within qualitative research. Ethnography, Biography,

Phenomenology and Grounded Theory did not seem as relevant approaches to this study

because of the need for the complex combination of structure without too much rigidity.

---

[18] Table inspired by Creswell, 1999, p. 75.

The case study is defined by Merriam (1998) as an approach that seeks to "gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p. 19). Moreover, the focus is on the process and not solely on the outcomes; on the context rather than simply on the specific variable; and on discovery more than confirming assumptions that could skew the study (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, one attribute of the case study that was particularly applicable to this study was its ability to focus on a unit (Romania) during a bounded time (1989-2007). In addition to data that existed within the boundaries of 1989 and 2007, however, I also provided relevant historical contextualization that predated 1989. Because case study methodology also allows for a combination of data sources of both qualitative and quantitative origins, I was able to combine document (policy) assessment from both qualitative and quantitative based literature in Chapter II coupled with original research via interviews with Romanian educators in subsequent chapters. Specifically, the case study design was a combination of exploratory and heuristic. As a means of understanding many aspects that impacted education in Romania, an exploratory approach provided the necessary foundation for better explaining the many variables. As a means of understanding the phenomenon of exogenous forces' and transitions' impact on the role of education, this study is also heuristic by its attempt to bring about a new understanding or confirm what is already known or assumed about Romania's transition. Finally, to explore education's role and context amidst its transition towards democracy in Romania, the case study would offer a new perspective due to both the subject as well as the tradition itself.

Although reform continues today, January 1, 2007 is an appropriate end to the case study because Romania completed accession into the EU on that date—a literal and

symbolic unification of Romania to the whole of Europe. Within these dates, I explored

the context for democratic transition in Eastern Europe to a limited extent and

incorporated study of emerging exogenous influences (and the concepts that help explain

and explore their impact) that each country faced and still faces: neo- and traditional

colonialism, globalization and isomorphism. Finally, I will provide suggestions for

Romanian elites to work within these contexts by challenging short-term thinking and

incorporating emerging alternatives such as long-term ecological perspectives.

Data Collection

I collected data via interviews with a small group of Romanian bureaucratic elites

(n = 11), individuals who held positions that influenced reform during the time

boundaries of this case study, or who now influence reform in an official capacity. To

supplement these interviews, I reviewed policy documents, articles and books to provide

a context for my interviews, which were conducted in person in Romania. One challenge

of data collection was to ensure that the questions and collected data were significant

enough to be comparable to the literature review and document analysis. Fortunately, a

significantly high proportion of policy and literature were available in English, including

all principal documents and policies, since most Romanian publishing occurs in both

Romanian and English.

The interview data collection required particular attention due to interviews being

conducted in Romania. In advance of my travels, I set up interviews with a core of

potential informants, who I hoped would make referrals for additional interviewees.

Because I funded this entire trip myself, and included my wife, who acted as an

interpreter due to her fluency in Romanian and as a dual-citizen of Romania and America, I was financially constrained to one week of data collection. This time constraint meant I had approximately two to three hours per person for discussions, which fortunately provided a significant foundation of data for analysis. While a small amount of external funding existed, this only source of funding was from the Romanian government, and taking these funds may have decreased the credibility and trustworthiness of my study, if only in appearance. I wanted this study to be free from any kind of perception of bias or agenda-based influences, so I was comfortable with how small fiscal resources may limit the duration of my study and resulting number of interviews. I was also unable to follow-up with the interviewees, and therefore use the interviews in their original format.

Finally, 10 out of 11 interviewees agreed to be digitally recorded on my audio recorder with accompanying handwritten notes taken by my two assistants and me. Only one interviewee allowed for only handwritten notes so that the interviewee could retain deniability should conveyed ideas or concepts be considered or portrayed as controversial. I also treated all interviewees' identity and comments with confidentiality – thereby ensuring their responses would be presented without identifying information and would also be coded. Additionally, conversations with various citizens while in Romania, and with Romanian family back in the U.S., allowed for further contextualization and observational research that is interspersed throughout this study. Between the interviews which generated over 160 pages of text and the accompanying document analysis and literature review, I was able to collect sufficient data for this case study to answer my two central questions.

While I conducted a literature review and document analysis for a foundation, I also conducted original research via interviews, of Romanian bureaucrats who held or now hold positions in the administration of Romania's education system. The questions I asked these bureaucrats or elite are written as follows in English, followed by the Romanian translation:

1) Please provide your educational background.

1. Îmi puteţi împărtăşi experienţa dumneavoastră?

2) Please describe the responsibilities of your current or former position in the Romanian Ministry of Education and Science.

2. Puteţi să descrieţi responsabilităţile aferente poziţiei dvs precedente sau actuale în cadrul Ministerului Educaţiei şi Ştiinţelor?

3) Please define what you currently and previously viewed as "democracy" and/or democratization. Do you conceive of any aspects of the Romanian society as being democratic during the pre-1945, 1945-89, 1989-99, and 1999-2009 periods? As my research focus is on the relationship between education and democracy, I'd like to discuss how you view your contribution to promoting democracy and democratic citizens in Romania.

3. Vă rog să definiţi ce semnificaţie are acum termenul de democraţie în contrast cu percepţia asupra acestuia înainte de democratizare. Consideraţi că au existat aspecte democratice în societatea românească înainte de 1945 şi în perioadele 1945-1989, 1989-1999 şi 1999-2009? Având în vedere că studiul meu se

concentrează pe relația dintre educație și democrație, aș dori să aflu cum vedeți contribuția dvs. la promovarea unei societăți democratice și a cetățenilor săi.

4) Could you tell me some of the key events/periods that have shaped Romania's education system (as it might contribute to education for democratic citizenship) prior to 1945?

4. Ați putea să numiți cîteva momente/perioade-cheie care au conturat sistemul educațional din România (în sensul formării statutului de cetățean democratic) înainte de 1945?

5) Before 1989, what kinds of public education, K-16 policies were enacted under Ceaușescu that might be seen as either promoting knowledge/skills needed for democracy or democratic citizenship or developing citizens to function in a non-democratic polity?

5. Ce tip de educație publică (K-16) a fost legiferat sub regimul Ceaușescu, înainte de 1989 și care poate fi considerat fie un promotor de informații și abilități specifice regimului democratic, fie unul care contribuie la dezvoltarea unor cetățeni care să funcționeze în contextul unei politici non-democratice?

6) How did the Romanian Constitution of 1991 and the private and religious freedom provision known as Article 32 affect education for democratic citizenship in Romania?

6. Cum au afectat Constituţia din 1991 şi libertatea persoanei şi a orientării religioase cunoscute sub numele de Articolul 32 educaţia pentru statutul de cetaţean democrat in România?

7) How did Act 84 in 1995 affect Romanian education for democratic citizenship?

7. Cum a afectat Actul 84 din 1995 educaţia pentru statutul de cetaţean democrat in România?

8) Was Act 84 directly correlated to European Union accession since Romania applied in 1995 as well to work toward the goal of developing democratic citizens? If so, how? If not, why not?

8. A fost Actul 84 corelat cu intrarea în Uniunea Europeană din moment ce România a aplicat în 1995 şi cu efortul acesteia de a educa cetăţeni în spiritul democraţiei? Dacă da, cum? Dacă nu, de ce?

9) How the Bologna accords may have encouraged educational reform in Romania relevant to educating for democratic citizenship? Do you believe that the European Union is a beneficial institution as it relates to Romania's transition toward democracy? What are the challenges in working with the European Union?

9. Cum a încurajat Acordul de la Bologna reforma educaţiei în România în sensul educării cetăţenilor în spiritul democraţiei? Consideraţi că Uniunea Europeană

este o instituție folositoare în ceea ce privește tranziția României către democrație? Care sunt provocările în colaborarea cu Uniunea Europeană?

10) How were you involved with any of these policies? If not, what do you think about these policies? Were they enacted soon enough after December 1989 and were they sufficient?

10. În ce măsură ați contribuit la aceste politici? Dacă nu, ce părere aveți despre ele? Au fost decretate curând după decembrie 1989? Au fost ele suficiente?

11) What external influences may have affected the creation or implementation of any of these policies?

11. Ce influențe externe e posibil să fi afectat crearea ori implementarea oricăreia dintre aceste politici?

12) Do you believe that any external pressures, such as globalization may have pushed for certain changes in Romanian education?

12. Credeți că au existat presiuni externe, precum globalizarea, care au împins educația din România către anumite schimbări?

13) What is your perception of the civic competency of Romania youth today, 10 years ago, and at least generally prior to 1989? How might you explain the data which show poor civic competency and interpretability in comparison with most other countries in the region and world based on IEA data?

13. Care este părerea dvs. în ceea ce priveşte educaţia civică a tinerilor români din ziua de astăzi, de acum 10 ani şi înainte de 1989? Cum aţi putea explica informaţiile care indică competenţe civice slabe în comparaţie cu majoritatea ţărilor din regiune şi din lume, conform datelor Asociaţiei Internaţionale a Evaluării Educaţiei (IEA)?

14) What would you have done differently if you could make any changes to policies or decisions that were made between 1989 and 2007?

14. Ce anume aţi fi făcut dacă ar fi fost posibil să modificaţi politicile şi deciziile care s-au luat între 1989 şi 2007?

15) Are there any other topics you would like to discuss regarding how education in Romania may be effectively or not-so-effectively contributing to developing youth to be citizens in a democracy?

15. Mai sunt si alte aspecte pe care aţi dori să le dezbateţi legate de cum educaţia în România poate contribui sau nu la dezvoltarea tinerilor în spiritul democraţiei?

With carefully crafted questions that provided time to build rapport, gain trust, and then discuss a variety of open-ended and closed questions, the interviews helped answer the research questions and simultaneously provided a very unique perspective on Romania's transition.

Sampling

To select these interviewees, I reviewed many sampling techniques. I opted to employ stratified systematic sampling because I had a core list of those I wished to interview and rightly assumed I would garner referrals when in Romania from a wide-ranging network. This sampling technique does not ensure extrapolation across all education bureaucratic elites; however, because enough commonality was found, their collective voice provided a new insight into the case of Romania. Through stratified sampling, I was able to ensure that those I interviewed comprised various age groups, both genders and most of the political parties,[19] thus approximating some level of population extrapolation.

The interviews took place in Bucharest, the Romanian capital and location of the Ministry of Education. I selected Romanian education elite who had a NGO/political/governmental post within the time boundaries of my study, and who had the capacity to impact education nationwide. These individuals, whether active or inactive officials, were directly connected to the relevant policies via creation, implementation or analysis. Moreover, I was able to interview very prominent elite within the education system in Romania ranging from former Ministers of Education, designers of national curricula, researchers teachers, and bureaucrats of high rank within the Ministry of Education—as a group, they were part of the education system before the coup, during the bounded dates and even today, which provides a rich and broad view of

---

[19] Many political parties exist in Romania and frequently change names.

perspectives, even with a small sample size. The following figure provides anonymous[20]

biographical information for later contextualizing their comments:

---

[20] Pseudonyms were selected to protect the identity of the interviewees and do not correlate necessarily to the gender of the interviewee.

110

Table 2: Interviewee Characteristics

Pseudonym[21]	Profession When Interviewed	Previous Profession	Service: Pre-1989[22]	Service: Post-1989[23]
Petre	Doctoral Candidate in Education; Researcher	NA		X
Dan	Researcher	Teacher	X	X
Mihai	Researcher	Teacher	X	X
Raul	Professor	Teacher	X	X
Victor	Researcher	Teacher	X	X
Simona	CEO [24]	Senior official ; national curriculum design	X	X
Daniela	UN official	Senior official[25]	X	X
Aurelia	Senior Academic Leader	Minister of Education	X	X
Ana	CEO[26]	Business Sector		X
Raluca	High Ranking official in Ministry of Education	Mid-level official in Ministry of Education	X	X
Mona	CEO[27]	Senior official; citizenship	X	X

With family and professional contacts in Romania, I may have had a foundation

of trust that allowed interviewees to "open up" more than they may have otherwise done.

---

[21] The pseudonym was created without gender alignment.

[22] For these two service columns, and "X" indicates service during the era indicated. Specific years would have provided identifying information.

[23] Many interviewees participated in an official engagement with the Ministry of Education at some point in their career in a position of influence.

[24] CEO= leader of education-related entity.

[25] In a human rights related entity.

[26] CEO= leader of education-related entity.

[27] Ibid.

This tactic allowed me to tap into their experience and connection to this transition. Moreover, because my interview questions highlighted the challenges these bureaucratic elites faced in transitioning as opposed to criticizing their failures, the interviewees were more open to talking freely with me and provided key data for my study. This approach ran counter to an early assumptions that, because Romania is a post-communist country where mistrust and fear were prevalent for so many years, I would not be able to secure interviews, most or all would not wish to be recorded on my digital recorder, or they would provide me with little helpful information as a way of "protecting" their recent past—something I would never know for sure.

Finally, due to the critically important task of building trust so that the interviewees would have a free discussion with me, I clearly had to meet with interviewees in person and not over the telephone. A telephone conversation with someone whom I did not know may not be the appropriate venue for establishing trust and eliciting the type of responses I wanted—open, critical and informative. Finally, based on finances, logistics and time, I interviewed ten bureaucratic elites who provided me with 160 pages of text, which provided sufficient information for the purpose of my study.

Observations about Interviewees

The interviewees with whom I met shared a common characteristic: a strong desire to communicate with me. This characteristic ran counter to what I expected, which was a post-totalitarian state where the bureaucrats would be reluctant to speak for various reasons. Some of these assumed and false reasons included: a fear of repercussions from

speaking openly with me; a lack of trust in me as an "outsider" or non-Romanian; a general apathy toward my study; and a failure to understand my motives in conducting such a study or how they could play a pivotal role in exploring various themes. In the end, I was wholly wrong: each person I contacted agreed to meet, and many recommended colleagues as additional interviewees. Moreover, ten out of eleven interviewees agreed to be recorded via digital audio recorder and signed my recording consent form. Even the one interviewee who did not agree to be recorded did permit my two translators and me to take copious notes.

Based on my observations and strong personal history with Romania, I considered it crucial that I not revisit interviewees to confirm my findings or even clarify intended meanings. My reasoning, besides personal experience with the culture as previously expressed regarding my ethnic and familial connection to Eastern Europe and Romania, is observational evidence of other studies whose interviewees later changed their wording, meanings or willingness to participate, following possible encounters with other colleagues and a fear of repercussions. Were I to go back and verify findings, I might have jeopardized the integrity of my original research, which should be interpreted with this understanding, based on precedent from other students' dissertations in post-totalitarian settings.

My interviews were conducted in English, with one exception where the interviewee required no translators. All interviews were conducted with a fluent English/Romanian translator in attendance so clarifications of meanings, questions or themes could be addressed immediately. My colleagues, one local Romanian and one Romanian-born American (my wife), helped me with translating. Following every

interview, and again after all of the interviews were conducted, we discussed and reviewed my findings. Without exception, we agreed on these issues. Overall, the interviewees' competency of English was sufficient and, given translators' assistance, I am reasonably confident that meaning was not lost in translation.

I found the interviewees to be warm, intelligent, well-educated and open to speaking candidly and critically about their country, the transition and education's role in this transition. The bureaucrats I interviewed held or now hold positions of influence within the education system of Romania, whether in the Ministry, Research Institutes or NGOs; therefore, I rightly anticipated a level of understanding about education that would serve as a strong foundation from which we would engage in more thoughtful conversation and reflection, thereby spotlighting their views, their words, and providing a venue for their ideas to reach a broader audience.

Based on my observations and perspectives, all interviewees were competent and well-informed. All provided a critical perspective, but were conscious of avoiding pessimism. For example, Interviewee Victor commented that, "I do not want to provide a very pessimistic view of Romania," while at the same time providing a very critical perspective.

Moreover, most of the interviewees had experience in America or western countries via education or work-related travel, with interviewee Auralia commenting "so I'm influenced, somehow, by the American university." In sum, while I cannot provide additional identifying information due to a desire to maintain their anonymity, the interviewees had the unique combination of a broad perspective and a narrow focus on Romania.

Data Analysis

As it relates to data analysis, my intensive, long-term involvement with Romania is very important. While I am not performing an extended ethnography, purely quantitative or solely interview-based qualitative study that may necessitate a long-term stay in Romania, my connection to the country increases the credibility of my findings significantly. Reasons for this claim of trustworthiness are as follows: part of my ancestry is Romanian as well as Slovakian, which provided a long-time cognizance of this region; my wife is Romanian, born in Bucharest, and helped support translation, cultural and navigation needs while in Romania for the interviews; and I have focused all of my studies when possible on Eastern Europe from university onward, yielding more than a decade of study on this region. Finally, my employment since university has focused on education at all levels, both domestically and internationally, thereby enhancing my academic preparedness. Therefore, with involvement on both personal and professional levels with Romania and Eastern Europe, I am familiar with many aspects of Romanian culture that helped me as a researcher by providing the ability to read through and analyze data with a perspective not probable by someone without my deep connection to the country.

For the analysis of my data, I triangulated the literature with my interview findings and also uncovered new emerging categories for understanding and reporting on interview data. To facilitate this analysis for organizational purposes, I used the NVivo 8 software program. By taking the transcriptions, reading and memoing, and then coding based on three emerging themes, I was able to efficiently extract quotations and ideas that

may otherwise have been lost. The following are the emerging categories for interview

data based on the number of times mentioned throughout all transcripts, which I utilized

as categories to organize the 160 pages of interview text as portrayed in Table 4:

Table 4: Emerging Categories

BEFORE 1945	EDUCATION + SPECIAL NEEDS	ISOMORPHISM	REFORM + COLONIALISM	REFORM + GLOBALIZATION
BEFORE 1989	EDUCATION + TECHNOLOGY	MINORITY EDUCATION	REFORM + CURRICULUM	ROMANIA + DEMOCRACY
DECENTRALIZATION	ELITE	NGO + EDUCATION	REFORM + CULTURE	RULE OF LAW
DEMOCRACY + TRUST	EU	POLICY + LAW	REFORM + DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION	SYNOPSIS OF MY STUDY
DEMOCRACY	GLOBALIZATION	POST COUP	REFORM + EDUCATION QUALITY	TEACHERS
ECONOMY	INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS	REFORM	REFORM + HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY	URBAN V RURAL

Moreover, I was able to weave the story with intact quotations to preserve the integrity of what each interviewee said; paraphrasing would have represented a form of censorship, even for the sake of efficiency. For the document analysis, I explored recurring themes, supporting and non-supporting context that was subsequently triangulated with the interviews. Together, the interviews and document analysis contributed to achieving the goals of my study: understanding the context and the extent to which education played a role in Romania's transition.

Data Integrity

To address standards of quality, I employed a number of strategies to preserve the integrity of the data and worked with the interviewees and their responses in a forthright manner. Regarding the issues of quality, one of the key aspects that supported proper data management pertained to the strong and well-developed context within which my interviews are situated. By conducting interviews in each interviewee's respective office, there was a sense of comfort and familiarity, which may not have occurred in another setting. Sufficient privacy existed, however, within the office setting.

The dependability of my data was partially addressed because my study evaluated a case from a historical perspective. Also, many examples of countries that have transitioned toward democracy already exist, and it is possible that more democratic transitions are to come. Therefore, it is likely that this study will be dependable at least for countries whose circumstances resemble Romania's—that is, countries transitioning toward democracy without an alternative elite or who contend with forces such as colonialism, globalization or isomorphism.

One of the major challenges I faced as a researcher, but was mitigated by my status as a citizen of the United States, was the confirmable nature of this study. Because I am not a Romanian citizen, I did not directly benefit as a result of this study. Also, while another researcher could highlight aspects of the transition that I am not discussing, intentionally or otherwise, I believe my study will be confirmable because I focused on the interviewees as opposed to only a document analysis. This combination allows for a higher degree of confirmation.

To ensure appropriate, professional and ethical treatment of this research, I drew from my studies in Eastern and Western philosophy coupled with training from my professors, and lessons and guidelines from the Institutional Review Board (IRB),[28] which are relatively extensive and relate directly to ethics. The topic of ethics also relates to one of the driving forces of this study, which is the linkage between the potential of democracy and individual freedom—hence, my interest in the topic of democratic transition. Therefore, ethics were a core of my interest in studying transitional democracies in Eastern Europe and also played a role in the extent to which I brought a critical lens. To be critical, however, was to evaluate, or at least describe and analyze, without necessarily portraying a person or idea negatively. For my study, this point was key: I maintained a feeling of trust between myself and the interviewee, and protected their identity through coding and careful quotation integration without identifying characteristics. I also did not ask questions that would make interviewees expose incriminating or controversial information. However, there were no real dangers for any involved in my study as this was an exploratory case study seeking to understand instead of seeking to assess blame for historical events that may have gone awry.

Threats to Credibility

The most important potential threat to my study was that I performed a single country case study and my comparative data may have limited legitimacy for extrapolation beyond the borders of Romania. A second threat to my study could be the

---

[28] Interviewees signed consent forms that were presented in both English and Romanian, thereby explaining the study, how I would protect their identity and that I was given permission to record digitally their interview.

perspective I bring as an "outsider," as someone who could be perceived by interviewees or those who read my study as not being able to comprehend the idiosyncratic or cultural aspects of Romania. A potential third threat to my study pertains to the interviewees and their respective answers to my questions. For example, if they were to entirely dismiss any consideration of the exogenous forces I purported to be an important factor in their decision-making, my study would have a different character than if they affirmed my theoretical postulation.

To address the first threat, I intentionally performed an exploratory study and explored the role of education in a transitional democracy and the perspective of bureaucratic elites within one country in the context of Eastern Europe. While there may be supporting evidence for future studies that could be extrapolated onto other countries, I did not use my findings in such a manner. To address the second threat, I took the stance that being an "outsider" will help provide a lens through which I could see perspectives that an "insider," or local Romanian, might not. Moreover, my direct connection to the country and vast experience with the culture through family allowed me to bridge the gap between outsider and insider. To address the third threat, I did not perform a value-laden study (i.e., I did not judge the elite's remarks in the context of U.S. values) and hoped to elucidate as much verifiable information as possible, even if it was from the perspective of the interviewee. Therefore, if the interviewees' experiences were to not corroborate my concepts, the understanding of Romanian transition would still be clearer, thereby adding substance and contribution. Although my study had three known inherent threats to its credibility, I have three clear solutions that I believe mitigated these threats. Therefore, I believe my study to be a strong contribution to the existing literature.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of my study started with the decision to focus on elites and reform as opposed to taking a "grass roots" or "grass tops" view of the transition that would have focused on schools, students, parents or teachers. Therefore, my top-level or macro perspective means I intentionally omitted important aspects of the transition. However, I believed these omissions to be necessary for the purpose of providing a new and necessary contribution to the research on this topic. Moreover, omitting the perspectives of students or teachers, or omitting a study about a particular school or university, did not negatively impact the credibility of my study. Instead, by having a particular lens, I was able to avoid too broad a study and was able to triangulate literature review findings with interview findings.

A more literal limitation was based on time. My study was limited by the amount of time I could spend researching, as well as how much time I could spend writing my dissertation. The study was also bounded by fiscal limitations as I was not able to spend extended periods of time in Romania for fiscal and employment reasons. However, any researcher would face similar difficulties, since all researchers must assess their resources and assess the start and end point of their research without compromising the credibility of their work.

In addition, my study was limited because I am an American who brought an "outside" perspective studying an Eastern European country. However, I addressed this limitation in that my perspective brought forth new ideas and concepts that an "inside" perspective may miss. Lastly, my study was limited because of limited English-language

research on Romanian education. Fortunately, sufficient information existed for the

contextualization and understanding of education in the context of exploring its role in a

transition. Moreover, I employed the support of fluent native-speaking Romanians who

supported any translation of interview comments and documents ensuring that the

language barrier was not a major obstacle to my research. Further, most of the

information that did exist was available via the internet or through the acquisition of

books—sufficient information existed on the concepts I explored, and sufficient

information existed linking them to the case of Romania.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS, THE IMPACT OF TRANSITION

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to explore the role of education in Romania amidst transition and the context for education reform. I bounded my study by time, between October 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, and January 1, 2007, the date when Romania entered the EU. To better understand this time period, I completed an analysis of education policy and law, coupled with a literature review. To provide a voice for the Romanian people who held or now hold positions of authority in the education bureaucracy, I conducted in-person interviews in Romania, focusing on the following two research questions:

(1) What factors impacted Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?

(2) What role did education play in Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?

The findings from these interviews, conducted in March of 2009 in Bucharest, form this chapter, which will focus on interview findings to explore question (1), and the next chapter, Chapter V, which addresses question (2).

To clearly report the findings from my original research, I have chosen to organize interview responses around the major emerging themes that, collectively, all eleven interviewees discussed to some extent. Based on the literature review, no significant issues were neglected during the interviews. To protect the identities of my interviewees, I have opted to not present my findings on an individual case basis, since

the context for each interviewee's comments would undoubtedly link that person with what was said and expose their identity. By focusing on emerging themes that fill a gap in the literature and by reporting the findings without any attributing information, their voices can be heard without compromising their job or person in any manner, per Institutional Review Board (IRB) policy. Finally, because the thrust of my research was to provide a voice for the Romanian people, even if partially represented via the bureaucrats who held positions before or during my research, and before or during the transition, I will provide as many relevant quotations as possible, and will keep paraphrasing to a minimum so as to spotlight what they had to say.

Findings

The following are themes derived from eleven interviewees as they relates to macro-level issues that impacted Romania's transition. While the interviewees are not representative of the Romanian citizenry or the Romanian government, they are representative of voices from Romania and provide keen insights into the education system and its context in Romania.

Before 1945

Before I discuss this period, dating from 1945 to 1989, I will first provide a perspective of pre-totalitarian times, which most interviewees considered the Interwar Period—a time period that was as far distant as they deemed relevant to discussing Romania today, aside from the occasional comment on previous colonial influences. The time period coded as "Before 1945," was characterized as having many positive

elements, such as democratic features and other aspects that were later influenced or destroyed by the totalitarian Ceauşescu regime. Interviewee Petre commented that

[h]istorically speaking, you can say that in Romania in the interwar period, that would be between 1918, after the First World War and until 1938, you could say that you had some kind of democratic mechanism. You cannot call it a democratic regime because we were actually a monarchy. It was close to the constitutional monarchy, but not a complete constitutional monarchy, that is, the king had one big power, and that was to name the prime minister. And what happened in the interwar period was that the king named the prime minister every four years, or even sooner, if there was unrest or something in the country, and then the prime minister organized the elections. And of course, his party always won, so this was the democracy in the interwar period.

The interviewee went on to say,

[c]ompared to communism, yeah, you had freedom of speech, you had free media, free newspapers. From this point of view, you had a very strong political movement, let's say, in the media of the time.

These elements of democracy, whether "freedom of speech" or a strong "political movement," provide a foundation for Romania and its future democratic growth. Interviewee Petre went on to say that

until 1938, and in 1938, there was the royal dictatorship [that] was installed. And that was for two years, and then we had an extreme right regime governed by Marshall Antonescu … with no freedom at all. [Moreover,] in Romania, there is a

125

very particular characteristic of this extreme right movement. They're Nazi and

fascist in their ideas and in their doctrine, let's say, and in their actions, also…

This Antonescu regime, according to Interviewee Petre,

had a particular trait. They were also fundamentally Orthodox, as in Orthodoxy

the religion, so they also had this trait, which is really particular in the case of

fascism and Nazism yet they didn't use religious symbolism. But in Romania, you

had this very strong religious symbolism that was used by the extreme right

movement, all of the organizations, and even the state during the National

Legionary State, 1940 till 1941.

Interviewee Petre continued, saying

You had this very strong connection with the church and views of religious

symbols as a way of legitimizing and supporting power. And you had, also, a very

strong connection with the church as an institution, a number of high-ranked

priests, let's say, and even the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church marched

in rallies along the extreme right movement, the legionaries, Marshall Antonescu

and so on. So you had this very strong connection, which is unparalleled to other

similar movements.

Based on this interviewee's comments and observations, it seems possible that the

fascist and, later, totalitarian regimes were powerful forces in undermining interwar and

future democratic development. Moreover, while most Christian churches typically focus

on character and ethics to some degree, the Church in Romania may be impacted by the

type of leadership and type of regime in power. Therefore, while the church in Romania

could have preserved elements to later support democracy, it seems to have not on a systemic level, while various individuals could have played a different role.

With a religion and church that changes its foci depending on the regime in power and a constant struggle for identity amidst many political changes, the context for this authoritarian growth and, subsequently, any democratic growth in Romania is based on a dualistic history. According to Interviewee Simona, the Northwest portion of Romania, Transylvania, has many differences in comparison to the South-centrally located Bucharest:

> Romania is a double country that is still trying to find its own identity. Why is this? So Romania is composed by two main parts, which is Transylvania [and Bucharest], and Transylvania traditionally, historically, was all the time having an Austrian/Hungarian background. That means basically, German culture, Austrian/Hungarian background, and this still can be seen in the country, probably the guys know that when somebody comes from Transylvania, we in Bucharest think that these people are different.

This dualistic history, or search for culture, influenced education. Interviewee Simona went on to say that

> Bucharest is very different from what you can see in Transylvania, [which follows] mostly the Austrian/Hungarian pattern, cultural pattern educational pattern, doing education. People were educated in very different ways for centuries there. And again, I can give you sources where you can see the big shock of Romanians from Transylvania coming to Bucharest after the unification in 1980.

Coupled with the Austrian/Hungarian pattern in the northwest, an attempt to follow a French style of education is seen in Bucharest and some outlying areas. The French pattern or French style is one that is worth discussing as a context for this case study for its foundational impact on Romanian education, as explained by Interviewee Simona:

> I'm talking on this part of the country. So that when you go back to Romania between the two World Wars, you have a French-type of education. If you go to the programs of study, the curricula, the mechanisms, the manner, the culture, the school culture is profoundly French.
>
> And this happened, for instance, the best Romanian education was in between the two World Wars, big successes between the two World Wars, big successes. It was a huge development of culture, education, somehow making the compulsory for grade education in countryside places, encouraging countryside schools. So education was somehow flourishing for those times.

Post WWII Overview

Following the installation of the fascist regime and subsequent communist leadership under Georgieu-Dej, a hardliner who won power over the more intellectual Ana Pauker, Nicolae Ceauşescu assumed power. This is the beginning of the period between fascism and the coup d'état in 1989. As a factor of influence on my case study, this time period is perhaps the most significant, as it set the stage for the subsequent lack of an alternative elite and country that was, it seems, ill-prepared to take on the burden of democracy.

After WWII, as previously discussed, Romania went through a profound change with the creation of a fascist regime and the subsequent Soviet occupation. Interviewee Auralia explained that

> there was a reform in higher education in 1947 or '48 or something like that. The promoter of the reform is [inaudible], the Minister of Education at that time because you don't have – you have to understand that the education system doesn't change rapidly, so the Russians came into the country, and we finished the Second World War in '45, and education has changed, no.
>
> So the education in the system was the same until 1948. In 1948, the system changed, and from a German and French-type system, it converted to [a] Russian[-type system].

Following the Soviet invasion, Romanian education was forcibly changed from a western-leaning and more liberal arts focused French system, which was also influenced by the German and Austro-Hungarian systems, to the Russian system.

> However, the changes to the education system did not happen as quickly as the change in national leadership. Interviewee Auralia explained that

> [higher education reform in 1948] was the first major reform. You know, the change did not [take] place suddenly. The professors could not be – they could be kicked out, all of them. Of course, there were a lot of fake professors, trusted by the – okay, trusted and well liked by the new government. But the majority of the professors were the old guys, and very few places, a good professor has been kicked out or had been kicked for a month or one year.

Between 1945 and 1989

Many perspectives were provided by the interviewees on this time period. Some were young during this communist era; others had already received most of their schooling. Interviewee Petre described this period:

> When the Communist regime came to Romania, you have a completely different story for a number of reasons. There was a nationalist feeling among the leaders of the Communist Party at the beginning, but again, there were not a lot of Romanians – of ethnic Romanians – heading the party at that time. And also, for the Communist regime, the Jewish minority in Romania was a very good source of money because, basically, what has been discovered through the archives was the Romania state was [literally] selling [Jews] to Israel, for example, for large sums of money. So it was a very good income source. But again, this is history as written in the textbooks.

This interviewee used interesting word choice relating to the communist regime, as it "came to Romania," as if from abroad. This comment may be based on the fact that communism came concurrently with the occupation by the Soviet Army, when soldiers swiftly came into Romania and power changed. The interviewee's comments on the Jewish citizenry are interesting because many of the intellectual communists were Jewish, including Ana Pauker, who wanted communism installed for egalitarian reasons, not for the authoritarian reasons that the occupying Soviets later implemented.

The interviewee went on to say that it is challenging to study this time period, especially from a comparative perspective from post-coup to the communist era. Specifically,

before '89 you have no idea what really happened because nobody studied the

field. You had no social sciences in the period from 1980 to 1989, so for ten

years, you have no history of social sciences in Romania, basically. [Education

was] very limited to engineering, mathematics, physics.

The interviewee went on to say that

there was no democracy before '89, so there is no topic of conversation, not even

theoretically. You cannot find any traits of democracy before '89.

Moreover, the interviewee's comment contradicts previous claims by other interviewees

that democratic traits existed during the Interwar period (Between WWI and WWII), but

perhaps at a vague and unverifiable level.

The "Before 1989" era was also characterized as nationalistic, more than before

1945. Almost overnight, the Romanian government created an awareness and

understanding of their proud and ancient heritage based on observational data.

Interviewee Petre discussed this heritage as having "a certain viewpoint":

history had a certain viewpoint, let's say. They had a viewpoint they had to obey,

and it was centered on the exceptional qualities of the Romanian people dating

back to ancient times, to the Romans and starting from the Roman invasions,

which we resisted brilliantly, but in the end, were defeated, but not because we

were bad. And going all the way to modern times. It was called the Golden Era by

Ceauşescu, the period from 1980, let's say, until '89, it was called by the Golden

Era. It was the peak of our development as a people, our nation.

This is interesting about the Romanian communist regime is that it had a very

strong nationalistic trait, which is, again, not really found in other communist

regimes, but Ceauşescu, especially, he had a very strong nationalistic dimension[29] of his dictatorship. And this appealed to a lot of people, actually.

Interviewee Simona provided a more distinct historical framework for understanding the "Before 1989" era, with dates and markers. This particular portion of the interview process was informative, as no literature has been made public that provides details regarding Romania's communist education system in terms of the transition from a communist state to a totalitarian state. Interview Simona begins by explaining that

because even though in communist times, we had some influence coming from Soviet Union in the '50s, basically, in the '60s, Romanian education went somehow back to the former pattern. Nobody declared this, but this was basically the French pattern. So if you go back to the '60s, to the '70s, and you check Romanian educational programs, and curricula, you would see that the differences are not that big, as compared to the curricula of France or Spain or all these Western countries in the '60s or the '70s. It's very difficult to explain; maybe we can come back to this. So now, that means that in 1989 and '90, when the change happened, so then, the Romanian education was, on the surface, a profoundly communist education with some clear characteristics.

Interviewee Simona continued:

Starting with '49, there were different periods of time because actually, we had from '49 to '53, up to Stalin died, so it was – so basically, it was a kind of trial to get very much Romanian education towards the Soviet model, so that happened

---

[29] This nationalistic tendency is not unique to Romania in comparison to other countries, but is unique to Romania when considering its history.

from '49 to '53. Even in the sense that textbooks have been revised in this kind of
Romanian tradition out of the textbooks, everything that was this kind of
bourgeoisie type of education out of the textbooks, and so on and so forth. Then it
seems that from let's say in '61, '62, we started getting out somehow from the
Soviet influence. And even though Ceauşescu came to power in '65, it seems that
already from '63, '64, gradually the system went back towards the so-called good
Romanian traditions.

How did Romania compare to other Eastern European countries in terms of the severity
of their totalitarian state? Interviewee Raluca commented that

I had some relatives – I don't have that many in Romania, but I know a little bit
how the life was going on in Poland, in Germany…so it is not to be compared
with what it was here…Looks like North Korea here.

Such drastic comparisons to North Korea, a country that represents totalitarianism
combined with extreme oppression accompanied by dire economic and humanitarian
circumstances, exemplify the struggle that Romanians endured, and the place from which
they started when subsequently commencing their transition toward democracy.

A key moment during Romania's increasing authoritarian rule, according to
Interviewee Simona, was

from '65 to '71, the system opened very much towards western culture. And
basically, from '65, in Romania, you all the time had, and this is one of my
explanations that we still kept contact with western world is that we never had a
very important censor for literature.

Not all the time officially, and culturally, from '65 to '71, and even later, again, we had outstanding cultural elite that kept good quality theatre, good quality and western theatre that happened all the time, probably theatre was one of the cultural things that kept this, how to say, some traces of any kind of democratic movement.

For instance, in the '70s, even after – '71 was an important moment because Ceauşescu went to visit North Korea, and he saw this strict North Korean model, and when he came back, he immediately promoted this new – I don't remember what was the bloody name of this thing, this new ideological education movement something. So in '71, things started to be closed. Like less western literature, more Romanian tradition, and from '75 even, he became this nationalist communist thing, so going back to the Dacians, the Thracians—this huge tradition [which started] 3,000 [years ago]. Suddenly, we discovered that we are old of 3,000 years, and going back to the old Dacian kings, and all this nationalistic stuff

As it relates to higher education, the focus on the West was supported by international travel and study that preceded the 1971 closing of Romania. When Romania students and scholars were prohibited from traveling outside Romania, interpersonal exchanges of knowledge were lost. For instance, according to Simona, before 1971:

all university professors were sent to study somewhere, a lot of grants to students, a lot of good people that were attracted to work in universities. So generally, very good quality stuff, but then after '71, it was, how to say, certain cultural leaders that kept this kind of relations, good translations [of research and literature were available] in these years.

While international travel was prohibited after this time, certain teachers, as vaguely alluded here in this interviewee's comments, tried to keep the openness of ideas alive through subversive ideas, or, as I shall call it, subversive pedagogy.

Teachers had to work in a very challenging setting however, especially if they were trying to preserve Western liberal arts in an increasingly industrialized system focused on engineering and mathematics. After 1971, Ceauşescu made a move that both physically and figuratively changed the focus of higher education, known as the integration period. According to Interviewee Auralia:

> from the education point of view, the universities started to be built inside the factories. For example, they did not build a new faculty, a mechanical engineering faculty on the hill, but Ceauşescu ordered it to be built in the factory, in the area where the industrial area was.

When asked if the interviewee felt about how the quality of education was impacted, and if it was a higher or lower quality education, the interviewee responded by saying that there was "less quality." Moreover, Auralia continued:

> in this period, which was called the integration period, two things happened to the higher education system. First, technical universities got more and more money in places, so they grew because the politics of the government was to ensure more and more people with technical skills, and the classical universities were shrinking.

Another Interviewee, Raluca, had a similar take on the Integration Period:

> during the Ceauşescu regime, in the beginning of '70s, after a visit paid to China and North Korean, once back from there, Ceauşescu decided that we are not in

need of theoretical secondary education and everything should be technical and vocational in order to serve better the purposes of Communism and to become extremely qualified to work for the economy and for all enterprises. This is why at this age he decided that anything of school should work with an enterprise, and teachers became employees of the enterprise.

The values or the mission of the school was extremely changed and it was just the idea of having graduates for prospective enterprise. What kind of democracy? Almost [none]. I mean, what kind of society – it was the regime and that's all.

There were some elements of democracy prior to Romania's transition toward democracy. Interviewee Victor stated that

it was interesting in these types of activities [subversive teaching practices], which were full of doctrine that the teachers leading them were ironic to the system. It was very interesting in a way what happened.

Interviewer: So there was a subtle or quiet type of criticism that existed.

Interviewee: Yes, for sure.

Interviewer: And you see that criticism being an element of democracy?

Interviewee: I think it was an indirect way of defending democracy. In a way, it depended on each person if he became democratic or not. He would behave democratic or not. This is very important because even if the system is a totalitarian one, if most of the people in their relationship with others behave democratic, it can be very useful.

Interviewee Victor continued discussing possible elements of democracy that existed during totalitarianism. In this example, the interviewee discussed the existence of teachers who criticized [societal] class-based education via the story of a

> math teacher that was angry at a student. Make a circle with a compass. It was not good. He threw the compass away and said "god damn the working class" [for fear of being fired, imprisoned, or worse]. They were afraid that what would happen the next day because he said something forbidden. One of the pupils in the class was the son of the mayor. But of course, we liked his courage.

Within the classroom in totalitarian Romania, there were characteristics of learning that, while not taught as "democratic education," provided democratic skills of a sort. Interviewee Victor explained that democratic education comprises the following attributes:

> to provide arguments. To be elected as class leader. In each class, there were three groups. Each group had a leader. The process was a democratic one, actually. It was a propaganda system. I remember it was organized like this.
>
> For group leaders, there were proposals made by the pupils, and there was voting. It was an open vote. You could raise your hand. The pupil that had more votes was elected as the group leader. Then the similar process for the class leader, which was called commandante. Then school elections for the school leader. This school unit leader was usually going in the summer to represent the school in extra-curricular activities. This was – if the teachers behaved democratically, he or she didn't influence the way of the vote.

The combination of these ad hoc democracy skills could have provided some semblance of a foundation for democratic citizenship once Romania became a democracy, but the interviews discuss an overall lack of an organized effort and not enough substance to prepare students adequately.

Education Before 1989

While there are some interviewee comments that overlap this category with the previous one, it is worth discussing that during the communist period, primary and secondary education followed programs primarily focused on engineering and mathematics, while the delivery of subjects such as history or literature was highly politicized and limited in scope. History and literature, according to Raul, "were more prone to political influence in terms of content." In addition, as Interviewee Mihai remarked, "[t]he accent was, at that moment, to – for mathematics, technology, not for humanities. Interviewee Mihai described education as

> during that time, we started a lot of subjects having no – or not too much relations
>
> with the qualifications. We studied those ideological subjects. History was very
>
> much influenced by ideology. And we started political economy, and so on.

This ideological education displaced time and resources that could have been attributed to skill-building. Despite this attribution of resources and time, interviewee Mihai said that

> it was based, in a way, on our aptitude to become primary school teacher or other
>
> qualification. But I think that it was, also, at the level of theory, it was a very good
>
> relation between the practical activities– my colleges were done in some

enterprises. Now, as I heard, it is – this problem of *practical* activities, it is really

a problem.

Therefore, communist education according to this interviewee was ideological and

theoretical and less practical with the exception of vocations such as engineering.

Regarding the quality of communist education, interviewee Mihai said that

actually education was really good. Education was really good and if you know,

we really had huge performances. Now again, I don't know, I cannot explain why

[that was] just because all of us really wanted a better life and we had higher

motivation. All of us, we had with only a small percentage ended up there, and

then at the present time for higher education results and everything else. But we

are really performing at an international level. So the education was good in terms

of content and specialized education in different fields and so on.

However, this interviewee narrowed the scope of the comment on education quality by

stating that

the quality of education before [during communism], it seemed, and correct me if

I'm wrong, but was very strong in mathematics, engineering, and physics, but it

seemed that history was somewhat limited because it was ideological; humanities

was limited because it was ideological.

College-educated Romanians who emigrated to other countries excelled in mathematics-

and engineering-related jobs, thereby representing the system as a whole when in fact

they were among the best educated. Based on my observations, in countries such as the

United States, Romanians with engineering or mathematics degrees out-performed

American colleagues on the basis of skill-level. This performance, however, represents

college-educated Romanians who mostly emigrated from the high quality universities of Bucharest.

Observational evidence from émigrés is, of course, subjective, but Romania's performance in the Mathematics Olympics, aligns with the observations in that certain populations within Romania were better educated than other populations. The Mathematics Olympics was biased in favor of urban students who could be coached and then celebrated as representatives of Romania and Romania's education system. Interviewee Simona explained that

> The second meter [besides excelling in employment abroad] for Romanians was in '93 …, we have all these Olympics. When we send Romanian kids to the Mathematics Olympics, we are the first. We have the gold medals. Nobody thinks that these are two students over-trained by ten teachers.

The impact of the Olympiad during this time period before 1989 was further explained by Interviewee Petre, who said that

> the student – there are special classes created for this [Olympiad]. Again, it's a really big issue, but nobody will formally recognize this. Nobody will say that this is true, but if you look into the field, you can easily see it. So you have these classes of students who are bred like cattle for this Olympiad – it's a little bit exaggerated, but something – for this international contest where they go, and usually, they win because there is no competition. If you study for eight hours a day only math for three months, you are going to win.

> It could be said that the elitist and urban-focused Olympics created the impression that Romania's education was strong, even though the focus was on one or two

subjects, and even though the percentage of students competing in these Olympics represented less than 1% of the total student body.

The ramifications of the Olympics are linked to education reform today, which can be seen as a reaction against the old system that cultivated a small educational elite. it is worth noting that Interviewee Raul considered the Olympics to be a standard to which today's "massification" or education for all is compared, as if it were a pinnacle in Romania's educational history:

at the moment, worldwide, the trend is from elite to massification, but this means a high level of lowering of the student entry body, and it shows. Legislation does not allow us, for instance, to form groups like elite groups and less elite groups, and they're mixed in the groups of students. Then you might have Olympics, like very [high] performing people, where some people just entered. Then discussion in your seminars, in your classes, it's very unequal, heterogeneous. It's difficult. To address both, and some of them, they just come with brilliant solutions and stuff like that, and these people otherwise did not understand what the smart ones have done.

Related to a focus on certain populations of students for the Olympics, Romanian education seemed to focus on urban vs. rural. Interviewee Raluca commented on the impact of the move from rural areas to urban areas as a way of control:

but after that, it was during the Ceauşescu, what he did, he moved the whole population from the rural areas to town. So this is just to say that you do not have any longer the feeling of belonging to anything because you have been out of your own environment, going in a big town where you are depersonalized, and then

being offered, if you are very good as origin, to become a leader. This was the only quality, in the beginning – or maybe later on.

This shift from rural to urban impacted the leadership and composition of communities and possibly destroyed the network of support that communities offer students, at least initially. To this point, Interviewee Mona expressed the following sentiment regarding the quality of communist education: "whoever says that is not a professional. Universities under communism were bad because [they had] restricted to certain areas. Also, [they] had lots of indoctrination." However, it can be surmised that the scope of what was studied was narrow, and subjects such as history would be politically skewed in favor of the party to the detriment of truly understanding history.

Within this constrictive paradigm, teachers created opportunities to tend to students' needs. Interviewee Victor said that

teachers could – also limited, depending on their availability to introduce new topics, take care of pupils' interests and introduce a topic that is needed or that the pupils are interested in, even if it's not in the analytical syllabus. For example, at that time, the textbook was created in a very strict accordance with the syllabus. The order of the lessons in the textbooks was similar with the order of the topics in the curriculum, which is not the case now. I remember that there were some lessons we didn't actually do or approach, and the teachers, knowing that we are interested in…made a lesson about the United States because it was a similar democracy and we were very interested. Everybody said it was a joke. Americans will come [to liberate us from totalitarianism].

Moreover, Interviewee Victor stated that "education was valued before '90s" by the Romanian citizenry, as something "to be proud of." Teachers also found clever loopholes in the program requirements that enabled them to preserve non-ideological or different elements of education. For example, on the topic of the teacher's ability as an individual actor, Interviewee Simona stated that

> for instance, I do remember that when you had the Marxist- Leninist course, the professor was simply telling us that look, this year, we talk on the origins of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. And the origins are actually Kant and Hegel, and he told all the year on Kant and Hegel, nothing on Marx and Engels, and this happened in the faculty in '76, '77. So for instance, in my faculty, we didn't have this kind of ideological education because no one of the professors promoted anything like this.

In another example provided by Interviewee Simona regarding subversive activities:

> I taught Romanian language, and all the textbooks started with a poem to the leader, but it was a method you want to do this in the classroom or not. And all the times, for instance, [I assigned this task for homework]. And I said, okay, this year, the first text is a very nice [poem] [I said this] because you had to say that it's a very nice [poem].

Through such means, it seems teachers were able to maintain a sense of western culture or, at least, of non-communist Romanian values and skills. Therefore, the teachers in high school and higher education, when they chose to, contributed to what Interviewee Simona considered a "double education," meaning that while the students learned one perspective

at home, they could learn an alternative perspective in the school, depending on the teacher.

Change in Romania: Revolution or Coup d'état?

Was Romania's march toward democracy an organic, grass-roots revolution whereby the people overthrew Ceauşescu and his regime, or was it a coup d'état and therefore a "processed" democracy, a phrase I created to describe the forced nature of the democratic beginning? The literature points to this transition as being a coup d'état, as Ceauşescu was removed from power following two key historical events: 1) the fall of the Berlin Wall, which symbolized the fall of the communist authoritarian rule, and 2) a meeting he had with Iranian leadership regarding his potential desire to procure nuclear material, which allegedly caused a stir in Washington, D.C., and Moscow. Interviewees' tones and insinuation, as well as direct comments reflected the idea that Romania did not indeed have a revolution, even though it was the only country in all of Eastern Europe to experience a bloody, armed transition. However, other statements by the interviewees are less clear. To this point, Interviewee Simona explained that the 1989 coup was often referred to as the "'89 event." The ambivalence with the nomenclature may insinuate that the "event" was not simply a malevolent coup without sufficient leadership change, nor was it an organic revolution from the people; instead, this change was somewhere in-between, but more closely resembling a "welcomed" coup.

One interviewee had a particularly interesting way of explaining the "event" of 1989, and discussed its unique status. In particular, Interviewee Raluca discussed the in-

between nature of the event as having aspects of a coup and a revolution. The following exchange with the interviewee is as follows:

Interviewee: It was not a civil war. When the war is starting, you can't any longer control. There are enough innocent dying for what has been in December '89, but it is not to be compared with what is Iraq, Afghanistan or another area.

Interviewer: Someone said that the transition followed a perestroika style, very slow – for a while, anyway – very slow, very calculated, to keep stability. Does that seem accurate, that maybe until '99, maybe, or the beginning, the idea that there wasn't an entire new population in the government. It was still some people who were formerly in the government for the reason of preserving stability, whereas Czech Republic had a whole new population of people.

Interviewee: I'm not very sure to which extent it was done on purpose or it was just an accident that has been this way. I think that the change in '89, it was not towards democracy. I think that is was just a hope of changing the leader.

Interviewer: A coup d'état?

Interviewee: Just to get rid of Ceauşescu. Because there were that many slow changes, and only in '92, '93, we learned that yes, maybe democracy is the solution. But I think that there are a lot of hopes of those – I'm not in favor of I don't know what kind of [word to use] to name it. I believe it was a sort of a revolution. I don't think that has been done by the Romanian population at all, but I don't even, as I said, think that it has been done for changing the regime, a total change of the regime, I mean, to move towards democracy. I still believe that it was a sort of humanistic phase of communism or sort of a socialism.

And that's why those that lost their power when democracy more or less has been

installed, they continue acting against democratic change. And I still believe that,

also in our days, you have a lot of nostalgia, not those that, for example, they lost

their jobs, and to some extent, you can believe that they have the right to say,

okay, we came from rural areas, we had no studies, but we were very good in the

Communist Party with a lot of revenues and now we are nobody. Them, you can

understand. They lost a lot. But also, the leaders, they lost a lot.

And I still believe that also those that were working for the Securitate, they split

in[to] different groups. They continue to fight each other. It's still something to

continue in.

This sense of nostalgia can be problematic, partially because inherent in the concept of

nostalgia is a sense of incorrectly remembering aspects, both positive and negative, of

whatever particular phenomenon is focused upon. If this is the case, nostalgia may lead to

an incorrect or tainted frame of reference. Due to this transition, where many reformed

totalitarian leaders remained in power in the fledgling democracy, what ensued over the

next twenty years in many ways echoed the way in which Romania's new government

began in 1990: top-down, elite-driven, and lacking an alternative elite with experience in

democratization or decentralization. This approach did not incorporate the citizenry and

represented a "business as usual" approach, thereby possibly undermining support or

momentum that could have been utilized to motivate substantive change. During the

beginning of the transition, from a symbolic perspective, the new form of government

may have wished to distance itself from the Ceauşescu regime through different policy or

structure of government given the overall citizen discontent. However, interviewee Petre characterized the first period of time after the coup as being

> a time of slow reforms, I would say. From '89 until '99, you had – even in
> education, this is something you'd see – you had contradicting reforms. That is,
> every change of government produced a new policy in a field, even in education,
> a new view, let's say, of how to do things. So this is why the process was often
> chaotic and you cannot find guidelines and ideas running around through it. There
> were some public goals that the government said we have to reach, that is,
> membership in NATO and membership of the European Union. These were our
> goals. Basically, somehow, we tried to do things in a way to get there.

While seemingly optimistic in terms of progress toward a democracy, Interviewee Petre acknowledged that there were other domestic forces at play:

> [one] had in power the Social Democratic Party, which is better known for its
> communist origin, let's say, because most of the founding fathers of the new
> Social Democratic Party in Romania after '89 are coming from the ranks of the
> Communist Party, and they even had public positions before '89. Even the
> president of the country at the time, Ion Iliescu, who is famous, even he was the
> assistant minister for young people or something like that, so he held public office
> before '89. And so this Social Democratic Party is better known for its communist
> origins.

About ten to 15 years later, there was a third component to consider: the next generations of leaders. To this point, Interview Petre said that

in fact, there is a second generation starting to come to take over now who has no

connections to communists for age-related reasons because they were very young

then, so it's very hard to say that they had any connections. Some people are

trying to do that based on their family background, which is not very nice, but

then, it's politics. They're trying to use the family background and say even he

was young but his parents or her parents did that and that and that. But you have

this second generation now coming, and it is not very social democratic

[progressive, leftist] as ideology, but this is the name of the party, so you have to

assume that they are.

What are the implications for these three forces: those who want a democracy, those who

were from the original communist party, and those who are the next generation?

Interviewee Petre concluded with the following sentiments:

[the next generation] think that they are the ones who, somehow, pushed for some

reforms because if you relate to the old leaders of the party, then okay, no reform

has been done, from their point of view. What really happened was that in

Romania, there is this problem, which is also in education and other fields, as

well, because all things are, somehow, related, and if you talk to different people,

you will see. You have these old administrative systems, which dates before the

communist regime. It dates from the interwar period and even before that, which

is based on the Napoleonic bureaucracy, so it's inspired from the Belgian and

French administration systems, together with the legislation and the code of laws.

Moreover, Interview Petre added that

what happened after '89, coming back to that, is that I think that we inherited a

system and … we changed parts of it, [but] we never paid attention to the

connections between the parts we changed and the whole of the system, and so

what happened is that now we have a system that has bits from that period, it has

bits from the newer period, you have other bits that are – and it's pretty much

chaotic. And this, somehow, leads to things not working very well in certain

fields, but you cannot say that the system is failing, as a whole. The system is

working; it's just not coherent with itself.

There is also a link between the transition leadership during communism and that of the

nascent democracy in the years following 1989. Interviewee Raul, when asked about this

overlapping relationship between the leadership, remarked that

at this stage [2009], no. At the beginning of 1990's, probably it was sort of

overlapped and some of the people who used to be in leadership before, now

generations have changed, and they are really very few, I don't think that we still

have such people. Even Iliescu, who used to be; now he's already in his own

party, he's old, and it's outgoing. So I think generations have changed and it's a

matter of lack of practice of democracy, and I think that it is a normal process that

we are learning , but of course, sometimes the population would like that they

would learn faster, and affects to be quicker and in our favor.

A possible explanation as to why the citizenry of Romania would "permit" or "allow"

authoritative leadership to occur relates to the mindset of Romanians. Interviewee

Victor's comment regarding civic or citizenship responsibility illuminated it:

people liked to be free [post 1989], of course. Everybody wanted to be free, but they forgot about being responsible—in any way of life – in any field of life – public life, private life, everywhere. And, of course, it was the role of elite politicians, cultural personalities, but there was something interesting. The powerful personalities – I'm speaking about the writers, composers, scientists, were also confused because the social values were changing, so they were not anymore seen as models, and they retired. They made a step back. They didn't like to go to the television and were scared, and say a lot of things and show their private life, for example, how others are doing.

This disconnect between what a democracy requires from its citizens and what the citizens expect without sufficient "input" has comprises the citizenry at all levels, including the cultural or technical elite as annotated by Victor. Whatever the failure or shortcoming in the transition, some of the citizenry, according to interviewee Mihai, are looking back to alleged halcyon days:

I heard many people saying that it was better [under] communism than it is now. Democracy doesn't work. It's something that you should not claim for because the life is harder. Society is more violent. I don't know if violence existed in the communism. Maybe it was at the same level or less because the rule of law was higher and stronger, or maybe it was at the same level but it was not revealed in such a large scale.

Like the political system, reverberations from a challenging transition have been felt in the school system; Interviewee Daniela felt that there were some positive attributes that have now been lost:

Interviewee: I think that the education system was smart. It created extraordinarily

resilient characters; it built character. And like now – even – and like after '89.

Interviewer: Yes, so character suffers.

Interviewee: Character suffers. Education in moral character suffers. So in that

respect, the education system passed before '45, was a builder of real

character…So this is the crux of the matter – is that you have in many ways, at

least in the beginning, you have a travesty of reform because in fact, the

willpower to change did not exist –

Whether based upon a lack of willpower to change or insufficient experience, the starting

point of this transition is mired in ambiguity, with a deep impact on both the political and

education systems.

Post-coup Reform

The transition year of 1989 and the context surrounding the precipitous collapse

of the Soviet sphere of influence established a foundation for Romania's decentralization

and subsequent democratization. With the latent ambiguity that existed during totalitarian

Romania, which is evident in the interviews themselves when discussing this period,

some overlap in discussion between time periods is inevitable, but in this section, drills

down to some deeper explanations and meanings. For example, Interviewee Daniela,

when asked if there were any carryover from the communist era that impacted reform, or

whether it a fresh start, responded

no, there's never a blank slate, as you know. There's never a blank slate. But

inasmuch as you see carryovers from the former pre-45 system, is perhaps the

relearning of history and re-evaluation of the past. And these whole – that whole

sort of parentheses that was the Communist period starts being put in a different

light... and you get all these nostalgias about the past.

Another important facet of post-coup Romania was how to rebound and tackle the

challenge of human resources: who was to be trained to rebuild the education system in

this country? For example, how does one address the lack of a blank slate, and tackle the

momentum of history? As a partial explanation, Interviewee Raluca commented that a

starting point is in rethinking the Romanian student and their characteristics:

in '89, when it was about changing, it was not only to move through to a market

economy and which kind of skills someone should achieve in order to better serve

the economy, as such, but it was also the problem how all these graduates, being

just robots serving the economy, could also be trained to act as citizens. And then

I think that a lot of challenges also on the shoulders of those in charge of

restructuring the technical and vocational education.

The idea of overcoming the idea of being "robots" is particularly interesting, as one can

imagine the focus on mathematics and engineering being predisposed to rational, logical

thinking and not necessarily creative, or lateral thinking. While not conclusive, the

interviewee indicated that operating within a free-market economy and operating in a

communist economy requires such disparate skills. Nevertheless, the "robot" mentality

may have empowered the administration before 1989, a phenomenon that lingers today as

Interviewee Raluca stated:

[i]t was the idea that those working as teachers and decision-makers for the

general education previous to '72 or '73…but they were very angry with those

working in technical and vocational education because it's also part of the regime. Who's guilty? Not me. I'm the leader. I'm the godfather. I'm blessing you everywhere. But all the others, they wanted to do change the whole system into the technical and vocational education. They had been against continuing your values just before '45, as you said, because it was a lot of tradition in that.

Therefore, the elite in post-coup Romania took no responsibility for their part in shaping the education system during communist times, and pointed fingers at others. Because no responsibility was taken for causing the problem, it seems that no one wished to take responsibility to solve it, either.

Based on this response, a pattern is emerging: while Romania's transition was unique, there are common elements that perhaps all humans experience during periods of change, e.g., not exhibiting enough patience for the reform process to be implemented and evaluated. Interviewee Simona concluded comments on this topic by stating

I would say that probably in the first ten years just – very conventionally, roughly speaking, the role of elite was in designing, developing, pushing forward, coming with ideas, generating new stuff, trying to change, raising awareness, so it was very, very much proactive.

This concept of pushing for ideas may seem to countermand the concept of Perestroika and a slow and controlled process. However, one must consider that some of my interviewees may have been part of these processes and therefore related to their creation, representing some bias. In addition, while the passage of many ideas or "pushing forward" could have occurred at the law and policy level more than in the classrooms

which, therefore, means the core of education may not have substantially changed despite these policies and laws.

The challenge in post-coup Romania was to not fully abandon technical and vocational education because of the stigma attached to it due to the Ceauşescu regime, but to identify the education strengths that could be borrowed and applied within the new democracy. Interviewee Raluca explained that the system in Romania, while technical and vocational, incorporated apprenticeships:

The dual system, as it is defined in Germany, has been very successful in Romania in those days before WWII, and also the apprenticeship type of education, as defined in France, because there were a lot of influences from France and Germany that stayed in Romania. And you can imagine that after that, all the relation in between the school and the enterprise is giving now a lot of headaches because this is the reverse effect because you can't any longer speak about go and cooperate in between school and enterprise because everyone having memory of the Ceauşescu regime is thinking what is was during Ceauşescu [and not before 1945].

And this was another compromise, then, by schools because they were pretending that we are going to be trained and we did almost nothing during the time…

According to this interviewee, education in post-coup Romania may have been too reactionary and may be abandoning areas of strength that could be reformed, and thereby are missing out opportunities.

With the potential to open to the "outside world", it was challenging to determine how to proceed and upon what should decisions be made. For example, data for all levels

of schooling were, according to Interviewee Mona, not to be trusted, "because it came from the state and it was secretive." Without this foundation of data, it is challenging to determine the strengths and weaknesses within the system, especially since it needed to be modified to prepare students for the nascent democracy and free-market economy. "Now," in post-coup Romania, according to Interviewee Mona, "statistics [are] gathered at the Institute by gathering information from schools. Financial stats come from Ministry." While this move is wholly new—those who manage education are in charge of statistics, instead of a centralized government entity not affiliated with education—the challenge is the lack of comparative data. Moreover, based on observation in discussions about this topic of data legitimacy and data accuracy, many lingering issues exist regarding whether the data can be trusted or whether the data are collected using modern methods and analyzed according to contemporary best practices. Still, as it relates to data, symbolic and literal changes seemed to have occurred.

One of the challenges of reform in post-coup Romania, both with general political reform related to decentralization and democratization, as well as with education reform, involves the expectations of change happening quickly. When the transition was just beginning, Interview Victor said that

> it was a well known political analyst saying in the 1990's that we will need 20
> years to become a democratic and normal society with decent living[30]. Everybody
> said wow, 20 years? It seems to be a very long time.

---

[30] A decent living which meets international standards based on each country's respective GDP.

If it was commonly thought that the transition would proceed far sooner than in 20 years, Romania's transition proved to be contrary to that point. The impression, based on the disconnected reforms and seemingly shallow changes, was that change would happen simply by removing, literally and symbolically, the head of the totalitarian regime and the country would transition far sooner than 20 years to a stable democracy with a thriving economy.[31] Instead, the idea that democracy was hard work was exposed to both the Romanian elite and the Romanian citizenry—democracy is not simply a political choice, it is a way of life that requires sacrifice, effort and individual responsibility.

Interviewee Raul provided a few insightful thoughts that could have been applied during this case, and possibly still could be applied today:

> one of the problems in our reforms, it was in the delayed implementation. So in terms of legislative reforms, I think that over the time they [the Romanian government after 1989] managed to pass good laws at the level of knowledge at that particular moment, I think that they were good laws. But in terms of implementation, there were always problems. My opinion is that we [Romanians with decision-making authority] also have a lack of experience in doing that, and it really showed. So for this implementation, what I would actually have done, and they [the Ministry of Education] don't do it even now. So we don't have the system as you have it, [public discussion about the issue. For us, it's still top down,] and then implementation is much more difficult.

Interviewee Raul continued:

---

[31] In observing the interviewees and in discussions with other Romanians, it is assumed that the goal is a stable and functioning democracy with a strong, free-market economy, but what that exactly means is not commonly discussed.

I would [have tried] to bring people to buy the idea at the level of planning it or

conceiving or designing it. And then people, people meaning academics, if you

talk about higher education, those who are supposed to implement, students and

so on. I would popularize it more at the design stage and get their input, but in the

real terms because now [today] they heard or they learned that this is how policy

should be designed, and they organize more with a focus group with ten people

and then we had invited the public. This is not what it's supposed to do.

These two interviewees believed, as did others in subsequent sections, that the process of

post-coup reform did not incorporate long-term, collaborative efforts—it was business as

usual (as under the communist regime), but in a different political paradigm.

Interviewee Simona explained a center [intentionally nameless here as it would be

an identifier] in Romania that was founded to specifically address education

implementation challenges related to the shortcomings of short-term decision-making and

a lack of collaboration, described as follows:

the Center was conceived from the very beginning, as a Center that was supposed

to work in grassroots, at the grassroots level, somehow implementing, trying out

implementation mechanisms, and implementation models. And somehow,

offering to the Ministry the grassroots flavor, and trying to feed in grassroots

happenings and grassroots good experiences into the national policy. So actually,

[we [those in the center]] tried to do something interesting with the Center,

creating a kind of double-sided reform, so the one that comes from the Ministry

that was theoretical, and nicely worded out. So the Ministry's supposed to

develop the top-down stuff, promote the top-down policies, but then, all the times

[there were] problems in implementing. So that the Center was seen as a very

powerful implementation agency, and worked very much with the Ministry, and

many of the policies promoted at the level of the Center, entered later on in

national policies [in the early stages of Romania's transition].

Interviewee Simona made a very lucid observation about policy creation and lack of

publicity: "[s]ometimes, very quickly, and sometimes without knowing – at that time, I

didn't know that much on how difficult it is to change educational system."

then gradually working very much in the system, working in many countries, of

course, that now my understanding is that look, we should have been more

patient, should have waited more, should have explained more to people, let them

understand, digest. We didn't have that time. We just pushed things all the time,

new, new, new, all the time. Now, what happened is that we simply didn't realize

that on elite, because we didn't have that much time, and know the exercise to

talk with teachers, to go to schools, to see schools, to discuss with people.

This emphasis on "new, new, new" aligned with the majority of interviewee opinions on

the general reform process; however, what has emerged from the findings thus far is that

while some new policies were created, allegedly just to show symbolic change, or

possibly to incite real change, the pace of *substantive* reform remained slow, despite

many policies. With so much reform happening, there was a lack of comparison with

other policies and difficulty establishing base-lines against which progress could be

measured. Romania, in its desire for rapid results, was not alone. Interviewee Simona

continued:

I'm also comparing with other countries where, for instance, I work now in

Azerbaijan, so we are just at the point to build up Ministry policies. So that means

that I can wait for the first results in five, six years. They do not understand, they

want the results in two years, and I will tell the same, "Look, it cannot be done

because all ministers start on something, and they want something happening

when they are ministers, while they are ministers."

Based on this interviewee's comment, Romanian ministers are not alone in their desire to

pass legislation to incite change, but this mentality of top-down policy without enough

focus on implementation may contribute to why substantive reform remains slow in such

examples.

One interviewee separated the process of reform from the process of change in the

education system itself as an issue of the need to focus on implementation. As a way of

exploring implementation through the lens of the education system and social

reproduction, Interviewee Daniela stated that

[o]ne is the process of educational reform – legislation, blah, blah, blah. But the

other is sort of the mechanics of education and what people are being taught. No,

not what people are being taught, how they are being taught. The second is the

relationship between teacher and student and how they're being taught…the third

is the mechanics of grading and of evaluation.

To this point, Interviewee Daniela continued:

The Romanian system – so far – in the past, has been designed to reproduce a

social, political, and economic order, which was based on control, right? So the

student, the parent, the – not the student– the parent, the teacher, the Party, the

leadership, were paternalistic figures – information and knowledge came from the top down…there was nothing to do but to obey and to accumulate knowledge. And that knowledge was meant to make the person subservient to the hierarchy... So you can see this very much in the political arena, but you can see this also in families. And you can see this also in the classroom.

Therefore, Interviewee Daniela, by circling back to the concept of the reproduction of social order that was alluded to in the section that discussed "Before 1989," is focusing on the idea that reform challenges and misdirection may indicate the need for new leadership in a democracy, but the citizenry were not equipped to shoulder this burden and were, still, waiting for the top-down reform efforts.

Further challenges to the reform efforts were echoed by another interviewee, who likened pre-coup Romania to a feudal castle. Interviewee Auralia said that

Romania has been like Feudal Castle. You know the concept of the Feudal Castle? You are a castle, you don't know who [your neighbors are], you don't care. You fight only with your neighbors. You are producing everything inside. So Romania, for a long period of time, has been like a Feudal Castle. When we open the gates of the castle, and we opened our society to the western influence, to the external influence, and we realized that we are not alone [in the West]. Some other people are doing what we are doing, but they are doing it better. And the universities were the first to understand that…

This idea of a "Feudal Castle" is also an appropriate simile, especially given Romania's Pre-1945 status as a monarchy and during the totalitarian era as an isolationist country stuck behind its own castle walls. Throughout the decades since that time, an

authoritative elite remains whose existence impacted the culture of the Romanian people—a destructive force on community-building and a sense of civic responsibility.

There is a sense that some of the overall reform effort was positive. First, and most obvious, Romania did not become frozen in a pseudo-democracy like Belarus based on various transition and development indicators, or remain unable to reform at all until 2010 as with Moldova; instead it managed to establish working systems of government, economy and education within this new form of government. As time progressed during the transition, some positive momentum was established, perhaps as decision-makers gained experience. Interviewee Auralia expressed that

> we are in a very turbulent [time] – things [education, political, cultural and economic] are changing. You cannot stop the change, and not all the changes are good. There are some changes, which are not so good. But things definitely are changing. They are becoming – they are getting more complex or sometimes are getting more clarified, and much better organized.

With this comment, the same interviewee who described Romania as a Feudal Castle felt that things were changing for the better, in some respects, a conflicting feeling that seemed to pervade many of the interviewees, i.e., was it really changing for the better, or changing and changing within a confusing paradigm of reform without momentum?

A final consideration of the overall reform process relates to the catalyst for reform decisions that occurred between 1989 and 2007. Interviewee Mona believed that exogenous, i.e., international organizations were the catalyst for most if not all reform efforts:

Romanian reforms [are] donor driven, [by] OSI, WB [and] EU. [The] EU is [a] major one because give the most money but problem of coherence because each entity has different ideology and goals. EU wants de-centralization and partnerships. WB wants accountability and structures. OSI focus on partnerships between institutions.

While later sections will comment further on exogenous forces and the roles of international agencies or countries that stepped in to impact or drive reform, a lack of coherence and overall strategy may have limited the attainment of policy goals.

Democracy

Because democracy in Romania seemed to be the only alternative to totalitarianism, based on my observations and participation in various discussions on this topic, and because the roots of Romania's democracy were elite-led and not grass-roots efforts, there seemed to be a sense that democracy is still an idea or theory rather than a fully implemented form of government. The interviewees with whom I spoke discussed democracy very abstractly, and any efforts to drill down to unearth a more specific definition or overall meaning was rebuffed and kept at a theoretical level. Moreover, each interviewee focused on various aspects of democratic theory or even democratic education, each providing a unique perspective. For example, Interviewee Petre said that

I think from a political point of view, it's a type of social organization of political life, basically, which allows citizens to express their views and opinions and values, to talk about them and express them publicly, to run for office and freely choose people that are running for office. I express it as a space of relative

freedom, I'd say, in which all the citizens are obliged to play by the rules. And

they get the biggest freedom that's possible under a social and political setting.

That would be idealistically speaking.

Other interviewees provided additional opinions and beliefs about what a democracy

entailed. Interviewee Victor remarked that

the first understanding of democracy was the liberty, and – exaggeration of

liberty. Democracy is liberty. I can do anything I want. I should not care about the

others, and a lot of effects appeared because of this first understanding. I think not

real characteristics of democracy were perceived by the common citizens, and not

even by the politicians. They preferred to have this overview. The first stage of

the democracy was chaos period immediately in 1991. I remember everybody was

confused, and even in the school system…changed overnight. Nothing was for

sure. You couldn't have long term [plans].

This observed confusion about what democracy means, and more applicably, how a

country should transition and what a person's role is within that transition, demonstrates

the complexity of post-coup Romania both from an administrative as well as an

individual perspective. Interviewee Raul provided a different construct as well as a

comparison to Romania's political past:

theoretically, democracy has to do with participation or more participation in

decision-making or high level decision making of people. And I would say that

yes, this does happen or did happen in Romania, however, implementing such

participation to decision making, let's say it's a little bit blurred. So then, you

would not really know how representative is the opinion of X, representative that

you have elected for your opinion. So once people are there, they do whatever

they want to do on their own.

 So then it's incomparable, it's much more than you choose to be, when we have

this totalitarian system, but still, I think that we are maturing and still did not

reach the state of a mature democracy.

Based on these comments, becoming a participatory democracy would require shifting

the culture of expectations in Romania. Moreover, the citizenry, especially its leaders in

education, may benefit from understanding clearly the end-game for Romania's

transition, as this remained a glaring piece of missing data.

Throughout the interview process, it became clear that an understanding of

democracy at a theoretical level was clear and well-informed. How this theory was

implemented in Romania is a different story, however, and slightly differs from the

discussion about the implementation of education policy implementation. For instance,

Interviewee Raul indicated that many of Romania's elite behave as they did before the

transition to democracy, and that Romania's lack of an alternative elite significantly

impacted its democratic development. Many interviewees offered their ideas about how

democracy works in Romania—or how it has failed. Interviewee Petre said that

if you refer to democracy in Romania, for example, after '89, you can say that,

formally, Romania is a democratic state since we had a number of elections

already, so we have 20 years this year, 20 years of free elections, so that would be

five electoral cycles. We also have free elections for the European Parliament

since 2007, so we are also in a larger institutional setting, which surpasses the

national framework because European Parliamentary elections are organized

nationally, but the representatives go to Brussels. So from this point of view, formally speaking, you can say that Romania is already a strong democracy with this 20-year history.

Interestingly, this interviewee went on to provide contradictory points regarding the strength of Romania's democracy:

however, as in all democracies, there are some problems that you can witness, especially during recent electoral exercises. You had, for example, violence in small and very separate areas, especially in the countryside. You had very violent election process…it's not a wide phenomenon, but it's interesting because it developed recently. We didn't have that, for example, at the beginning of the democracy in the 1990's, let's say. So you had factions or different supporters of different parties that had violent meetings during the Election Day or before that, during the electoral campaign.

There are other aspects, however, that Interviewee Petre commented on that deserve a strong focus:

The government is trying to have transparent and publicly disputed, let's say, policies and so on, but usually, most of the decisions are not very transparent and not all the time the political process is influenced, let's say, by the civic society or other actors in the life. I'm talking here not only about NGOs, for example, I'm also talking about labor unions or employers' associations and so on. So the influence coming from the [civil] society on the political class is not yet very big, and this may be, also, because lobby, for example, is not yet accepted and

officially recognized as a form of influencing policy in Romania. So you don't

have a lobby law, you don't have official lobby groups.

This idea of lobbying—petitioning one's government to incite reform—is still new to Romania, a symptom of a citizenry that rarely demands representatives create a particular law and of a legislative body that does not, presumably, spontaneously creates laws that concede power to the citizenry.

A final discussion point with regard to Romania's democracy and the latent power of history was the idea that, since the Yalta conference when "Europe was divided" (Glenny, 1999, p. 523) following World War II, Romanians were, according to interviewee Ana, "all were waiting for the Americans." Interviewee Ana continued:

Because everybody saw that the Americans will come to the occupied Romania

because nobody could believe that we were given to the Soviets. And if you go

back – so some days ago, I saw on television, the Yalta Conference where they

had the confidence of Churchill and Stalin, and they showed how they divided the

map. So it simply happened that this bloody country got under the Stalin part of

the whole thing.

This perspective of waiting for the Americans is problematic for two main reasons. One, although the United States has a strong and stable democracy, it has its own challenges and is not a perfect model to emulate, even if the model was possible to emulate. Two, Romania has its own personal resources to resolve its domestic challenges, and does not need to "wait" for anyone to save them.

Interviewee Auralia even remarked about how different Romania might be today had Yalta gone a different way, from an economic perspective, and had the United States been Romania's "frame of reference":

> Very different, I would say. Very different. If the U.S. was there, so then Romania would have been currently, in my view, for instance, in '39, Romania economically was better than Holland, Belgium, Denmark.

Therefore, this awareness that there was an alternative to Russia, and that alternative was the United States, was preserved throughout Romania's communist and later totalitarian era. Eventually, when Romania became a democracy, the notion of connecting to other countries with strong democracies, like the United States, represented a fifty-year dream.

The emerging notion that liberty was for individual freedom without responsibility. The necessary skills Romania needed as a country transitioning toward a democracy with a free-market economy Interviewee Raluca said, was not only

> for high-order thinking skills, which U.S. is defining of having only need of them because of the knowledge economy, which was, to some extent, already achieved in the U.S. In Europe, we are still looking for achievement of it, and therefore, the range of skills are not necessarily specific only to knowledge economy, but we are still looking for post-industrial economy that is going on in Europe.
> Of course, Romania can't be an exception because we are not necessarily at the level of the knowledge economy at all, and therefore, the transition from this centrally planned economy at the level of the modernization stage, just trying to go ahead into the market economy and reaching the post-industrial phase and

moving through different developments to this knowledge-based economy, this is where we are, for the moment.

What are lacking, perhaps, are not simply skills but rather the right attitudes and beliefs to seek out the skills. Interviewee Raluca continued, remarking that

the capacity of living in a city and being capable to be proactive, meaning that you have not simply to look for what the others are doing, but to try to defend your rights. Your capacity to live as a citizen, meaning the rights to know institutions which are their responsibility, who's doing what in order to serve your rights, what you should do in order to serve the community and all the other citizens, and then all the other kind of education to be able to support, for example, the education for the ecological education, supporting the environment or protecting those that are either kids or the old generation or the old population in a town.

It was, to some extent, focused on learning about the institution of democracy, their rules and responsibilities, where to go to fight for your rights or to ask your rights. So knowing that, and then about individuals, so how you as an individual should act in the prospective of being a so-called good citizen. And also defining …which kind of values we are serving – I mean, freedom, but what to do with the freedom? So in terms of written curriculum, I should say that it was not such a long process because it was quite easy to communicate with experts from other democracies and to look what they did.

While the comments thus far have focused on Romania's democracy and relatively macro-level perspectives, Interviewee Raluca connected the idea of citizenship with civic education, believing that

> in case of civic education, maybe we could say it's achieved. I'm not a specialist and I do not want to have opinion in this respect, but I'm referring to those teachers that are acting in the field of the specialized skills, we do not have any longer subjects, we are working based on modules, and that's why I find it very difficult to – we have integrated skills into a module just to be able to do something when you finish a module. And I feel this need of support.
>
> Then everyone to be a citizen and to know just discussing with the student is not only becoming a specialist in, I don't know which qualification, but also, to find solutions and to be enough imaginative to instill a little bit, again, and to infuse a little bit of attitude of civic education in there. But because we have a lot of – the teachers almost at the age of retirement, the big majority of them, so could it change [their] attitudes at this age? Hard to believe.

Therefore, the interviewee was arguing that it is not curriculum at fault for failing to adequately preparing citizens for democratic citizenship but rather teachers who were educated and taught under the totalitarian regime and have not adapted their pedagogy. When asked whether Romania was unique as a democracy and with its challenges, Interviewee Raluca remarked that

> [i]t was a Ceauşescu regime, as such. That's why we are, unfortunately, so different from the others because –
>
> *Interviewer: Totalitarianism.*

169

Interviewee: Absolutely. More even than that.

Because Romania was a totalitarian state and not simply a communist state, it perhaps

had different challenges to undertake, and different facets of a transition to explore for

solutions.

Economy

As Romania's democracy was developing, concurrent efforts were made to

establish and refine its economy, including finding ways to participate in the global

economy. The first challenge was to privatize and commoditize many aspects of

Romania's economy and establish a free-market economy.[32] This aspect of Romania's

transition occurred quickly, and the interviews suggest that the efforts to establish a free-

market economy superseded the desire to have a strong democracy. However, there were

many challenges with the economy in general and the economy as it relates to education

in a free-market context. Interviewee Victor explained that

> it was interesting that several years after the communism because the life was
>
> very hard, we found what inflation is about. We found out what unemployment
>
> means. We didn't know that before. [Under] communism, we had money, but
>
> nothing to buy. Then we didn't have money but a lot of things to buy. The level of
>
> frustration was very high.

The government of Romania needed to find a source of revenue, and a flat tax was one of

their solutions. Interviewee Petre remarked that "currently, the tax in Romania is 16

---

[32] The author is using this term to discuss the type of economy to which they are
transitioning toward, based on both observation and literature; it should be noted that the
words "free-market" economy may not be always used by the interviewees.

percent for everything you own, for all income. It's a fixed rate." With this tax rate and

already marginal incomes, it is challenging for Romanians to have enough money to feel

the benefits of a free-market economy—or at least to the degree that may have been

expected. However, there is a balance between wanting more money and too much

money. Interviewee Petre explained that the mindset of Romanians may contradict the

notion of earning money beyond a certain amount, and therefore may undermine the

concept of growing an economy beyond its current size:

> it's not a very good thing in Romania to [earn] a lot of money, so it's better to
>
> keep a decent level…People don't like rich people.
>
> *Interviewer: Because of trust?*
>
> Interviewee: Because usually, big sums of money come from uncertain places.
>
> And usually – you can find this in – we have this yearly social opinion polls about
>
> stuff and they ask, also, about this is one of the items in the questionnaire is
>
> regards people's opinion on fortune, how is fortune made in Romania. And most
>
> people say it's out of theft.

While the focus of my interview questions and the subsequent discussion briefly

touched upon the subject of the economy at large, there were many interesting aspects of

the new economy that affected education, and higher education in particular. For the first

time in over 50 years, education became part of a free-market economy and its various

components such as textbooks, salaries, heating, construction etc., required revenue, and

there were many ensuing challenges. Also, due to Article 32 of the Romanian

Constitution, private higher education was permitted, which also complicated reform

efforts and the idea of commoditizing education. As it relates to the economy's impact on

educational quality, or rather, how educational quality was impacted by the transition

toward a new free-market economy, there were many factors to consider. Interviewee

Victor said that

> unfortunately, during these 19 years of transition, also in the public universities,
> there were some changes that affected the quality. One of them is the principle of
> finance per student. If you have a higher number of students, you receive more
> money from the state budget. Indirectly, it was a perverse secondary affect that
> you should try to have more students. Don't be so demanding. A smaller number
> of students means less money.

Interviewee Petre discussed the challenges with public higher education fees, and how

Romania has adapted:

> There is an admission exam in the public universities. According to the grade, you
> get free or you have to pay. But on the other hand, most state-run public
> universities in the past three years, let's say, have started admitting students only
> based on their baccalaureate grade, which is something they come from their
> home high schools. Or even easier than that, they just require them to come for an
> interview with some staff members from the university, which is an interview
> based on general culture the person has and a small file containing the CV and
> what they did, which is not a lot.

When asked if the interviewee thought that this change will increase parity so that more

students from rural areas can gain access, the interviewee responded by saying that

> [s]o far, it hasn't done that. I think the reason this happened was because there are
> less and less – demographically speaking, our population is getting older and we

have less and less children that are coming into universities, and so we have to

relax the criteria to be sure that we get people inside because we need students.

And so it's kind of a contest between universities which one has the easiest way

of getting in to attract more students because financing of public higher education

institutions is made, first of all, according to the number of students they have.

This is the main criteria for financing higher education institutions. And since

higher education is not compulsory, then you have to attract students.

There is a similar story in private higher education. Quantity over quality is a

challenge in this sector of higher education, too. Interviewee Victor remarked that

> [i]t depends on the institutional policy. There is one of the higher universities –
>
> the private universities. It is well known as a business. It is called Spiru Haret. I
>
> don't know right now the figures, but let's say that Romania has 300,000 students.
>
> From these 300,000 students, 250,000 students are in Spiru Haret University. It is
>
> just an example. I'm not sure. What I am trying to say is that more three fourths of
>
> the students are in one university in the country, so this is really a business.

While private higher education could have taken advantage of a fresh start and led the

transition in terms of innovation and democratic education with a liberal arts focus,

commensurate with the respect of a leader, it finds itself in a clear 2nd tier, with rarely any

positive comments from the interviewees about its quality or profit-making intentions.

With regards to primary and secondary education in Romania's new free-market

economy, there are many challenges. The main, overarching challenge is related to the

decentralization that all aspects of Romanian bureaucracy faced. As the Ministry of

Education decentralized responsibilities to the local administration, there were clearly

gaps in terms of ability and competency, as well as an overall plan with regard to execution. To provide an overview of the mechanisms in funding primary and secondary education, Interviewee Dan described the process as

> 80 percent of the resources put in education are for salaries, so for human resources, yeah? This is covered entirely by central government, via local government. Local governments are like ATM machines, so they are not – actually, they are not putting any – but it's a way of – they're supposed to pay some tax to the government. The government said okay, don't pay this tax until you pay the salary to the – but actually, this money is coming from the central government, but being paid by local government, sometimes they are mistaken and they think that it is a local administration contribution …there is 20 percent left. Out of this 20 percent, again, more than 10-12 percent of this are covered, also, by central government, big, national programs with exchanging furniture or rebuilding some schools and so on. So at the end of the day, for real investment, only a few city halls or local governments can afford to do this. Most of the time, what they really cover is the maintenance because on paper, the schools belong to local administration. They are administered by local administration.

Therefore, taxes do not flow from the local to the federal and back to the local, as explained by Interviewee Dan:

> In practice, it is done is that the local – some of the value added tax is not paid – that is due to the government is not actually paid by a local administration, but it's kept by this local administration to pay the salary of the teachers, for instance. So it's a way of – how not to exchange a lot of tax money between different layers of

government. But in fact, how much and who is paying it, it actually is the
government who decides, at the beginning of the year, that this is the share of –
let's say 6 percent. This is why we have a sort of craziness about what is the
percentage of the education this year – it's 6 percent; it's 4 percent; it's 5 percent.

Interviewer: Of GDP?

Interviewee: Of GDP, exactly.

Interviewer: And what is it, on average – around 5 or 6?

Interviewee: Well, on paper, last year was 6, but it was – yeah, it was. It's much
less than this because some of the money were not spent; some of the money were
not put by government, but by foreign programs or – you know that this – for
instance, European projects and so on, but they have their own logic in
development, so actually, at the end of the year, they saw that this money were
only on paper because it was not actually used by schools and so on.

Romania spends a low high percentage of its GDP on education[33] in comparison with
other European nations, and because its economy is smaller, this portion does not
necessarily correlate with proportionate expenditures per student. Moreover, the system
as outlined is complicated and inefficient, as it leaves fiduciary responsibility to the local
administration who are historically never in the role of making decisions but rather
executing what is dictated by the centralized Ministry. This challenge of decentralization
remains significant throughout Romania's transition.

---

[33] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-117/EN/KS-SF-08-
117-EN.PDF

Exogenous forces

In this section, I report on interviewees' comments related to the three emerging concepts in the course of my literature review: colonialism, globalization and isomorphism. While the interviewees may not have utilized exactly these terms for the exogenous forces, their descriptions usually align with the forces I have defined previously and serve as examples to better understand what occurred. While this chapter will discuss the forces and phenomena themselves, Chapter VII will delve into the theoretical reflections.

Before delving into the interviewee responses, it is important to note the following understanding of these forces' relationship as being both linear over time and overlapping in effect. A clear way to articulate these relationships is depicted in Figure 7 and Figure 8, below. Figure 7 represents the ordinal relationship between the exogenous forces, with respective examples or characteristics for points of reference. While the emerging themes follows a timeline, the following represents the blurring of the lines, and how the concepts are not clear cut, when they seek to explain the phenomena that occurred. Rather, they are ways of explaining historically less-powerful countries that have had less control over their destinies than larger or more powerful countries.

Figure 7: Ordinal Relationships of Phenomena

COLONIALISM + NEOCOLONIALISM

| Roman | Ottoman | Hapsburg | Soviet |

GLOBALIZATION

| Western-biased | Capitalistic | Homogenizing |

ISOMORPHISM

| European Union | World Bank | USAID |
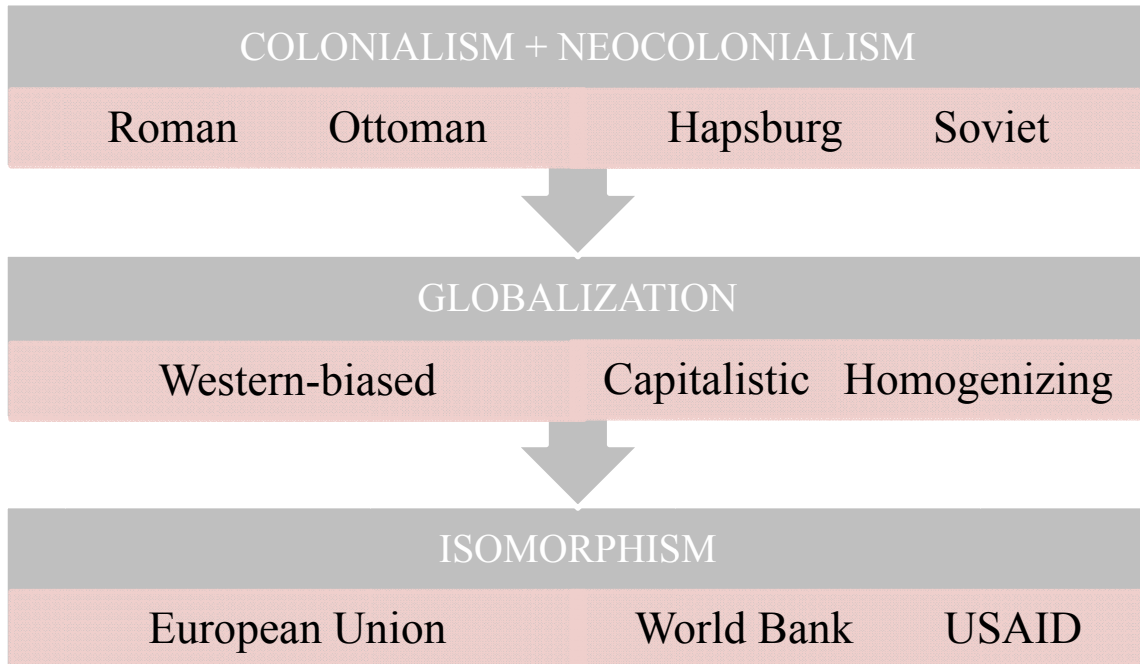
This dualistic relationship between the phenomena is must be understood as both linear and overlapping. Moreover, this helps understand how the past influences the present. With the knowledge that colonialism cultivated a paradigm for globalization, which then maintained that paradigm for isomorphism, the distinction between which of these forces impacted exactly which domestic dimension is not always clear. As portrayed in the figure below, there are overlapping impacts that cannot be distinguished. Wherever possible, I have distinguished between which specific force impacted which specific aspect of Romania's transition and education system. However, the purpose was to first acknowledge and secondly to explore these phenomena. Therefore, I have tried to avoid "boxing in" reality within arbitrary constraints, as depicted in Figure 8 below with an overlapping Venn Diagram:

Figure 8: Overlapping Impact of Phenomena
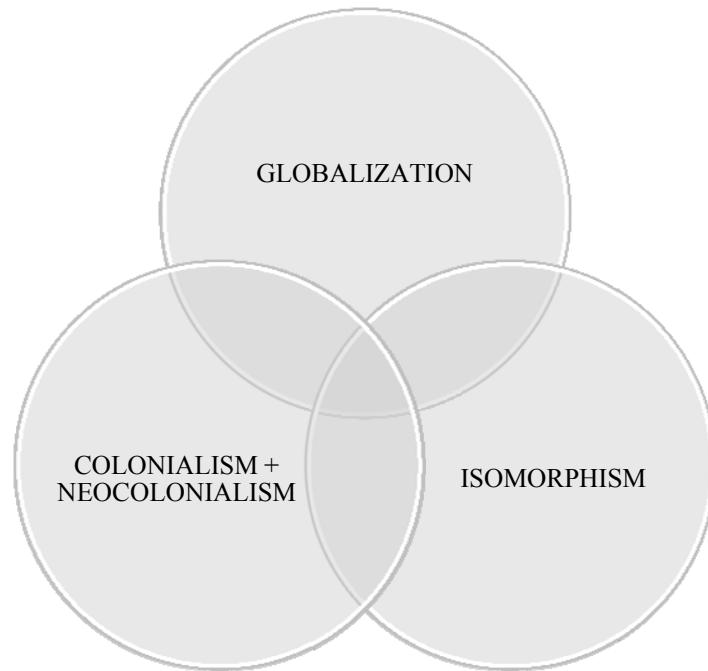
Many of the interviewees correlated the external forces of colonialism, globalization and isomorphism as "pressures," a word that tends to have a negative connotation, as if it makes one do something that one does not wish to do. However, this was not always the case: some interviewees felt that the external pressure was necessary for reform and for the process of democratization to continue.

Interviewee Mihai, had an interesting perspective on the exogenous forces:

Interviewer: Well, I think, what's interesting too is the main idea, I think, of the study is that it's not just up to Romania to change, there are other factors at play in transitioning, and nobody becomes a democracy in a vacuum. So there are a

lot of different factors to analyze. And all the studies I reviewed, nobody has done

a macro study, a big – a broad study to look at all of the external factors.

Interviewee: External factors? Yes, there are some contributions, but I don't know

if they are official, the reports made by the World Bank…we had a very big

project of the World Bank, and now we refer to this period as to the reform made

by the World Bank. And we usually add the Government of Romania, but the

main words, it's [the] World Bank.

This interviewee did not discuss the role of the external forces as being negative, or the

sole source influencing the transition, but rather part of an entire collection of forces both

domestic and exogenous that impacted change.

However, the majority opinion was that external forces were critically important

in Romania's transition, and particularly influential on the education system. The

following exchange with Interviewee Daniela articulated the importance and positive

impact of the exogenous forces on Romania's transition:

Pressure, outside pressure. Everything in Romania happens because of outside

pressure. And the reason why nothing happened before is partly because nothing

was desired, quite frankly. Very little was set in motion to change this social

reproduction.

Then, as the various other international players, such as USAID and the European

Commission – European Delegation – started into the field. All of a sudden, you

had all of the policies, all the pressure, all the might of the US Government

because we were a private player, right. All the might of the US Government

through USAID, even though it wasn't brought to bear, but their mere presence

meant institutional governmental presence; and therefore, indirect pressure. And the might of the European Union.

And by the way, you should know that the UN – Romania was one of the few East European countries that had an ongoing UN presence in the '70s.

When asked if the Interviewee felt that these external pressures were seen as positive forces, the Interviewee responded by saying: "Of course. Of course. Of course." Finally, when asked how an international aid organization or NGO becomes a force, or pressure, Interviewee Daniela said

the EU becomes a magnet for change. It becomes a "pressure." Once the accords of association are signed in 1999 – but before – they don't – they are not pressures because they don't have to conform. Romania doesn't have to conform to any special legislation, or whatever, in order to be a full partner – a full-fledged partner. On the other hand, what's interesting, is the mere sort of presence of these policy experts and all of these exchanges, and all that is a way to put the wheels in motion to reform. So in fact, you can really consider that "pressure" is only inasmuch as Romania seeks to belong to the club, to NATO, to the Euro-Atlantic integration…to NATO and to the European Union.

Therefore, there is a difference between a formal pressure, such as when a country becomes a member of an organization, and a vague force, such as globalization. For example, Interviewee Daniela stated that

otherwise, there is no formal pressure. I mean there is no pressure, allegedly, not even when you want to belong to the club. But, in fact, the fact of conforming to some sets and some standards puts pressure to reform. Before, it's just sort of the

mere existence of an alternative model and the exchanges that create a transformation.

Exogenous pressures were largely seen as positive and even inspirational, as one interviewee concluded. One of the main outside players in Romania's transition was the World Bank, whose efforts at the beginning of the transition were crucial to commencing a series of reforms that transpired prior to and along with reforms for the EU as well as general domestic interests. Interviewee Victor explained that of the many outside forces, the World Bank was

> very well received. It started in 1994, the preparation, but the first curriculum was introduced in 1998. I was a teacher at that time, so I tested the real new curriculum because it was the first curriculum bringing real changes. I think at that time, the level of the availability to change was still high. Teachers and parents and everybody agreed that we need changes in the education system, that we should have better quality, that we should have more individualized training routes and so on.

Interviewee Raluca explained that these external forces

> inspired us a lot especially when it came [to] the case of EU accession. We did a lot just following the requirements, and maybe again, without paying enough attention to the negotiations because we have been very easygoing negotiators. And that's why, by now, we are out of constraints to overcome…
>
> *Interviewer: Meaning the various administrations would go along with whatever was said. They'd say, yes, yes, we'll do this, we'll do that. And now, all of a sudden, you have to do it and it's challenging?*

Interviewee: Yeah. I think that because of this legacy of the totalitarianism, we

do very much at the request, rather than being innovative.

While the perception of exogenous forces was largely positive, as discussed, one

of the byproducts of "waiting" for outside pressure is that the desire for reform is not

organic, and the momentum is upheld by external factors that, when removed, slow. As

Interviewee Raluca explained

after 2007, the pressure of becoming a [EU] member disappeared and since there

is no one with a stick calling for new achievements, we laxed very much. I don't

know, maybe this agreement with IMF will give back a little bit of accountability

to someone. This is not to say that – there is a sort of a not strong reporting, but a

light reporting still goes on as a member state, but it's too light for motivating us

to do it. And then there is not very much consensus to one idea. I think that we

are very much behaving [by] having an external opinion.

While the discussion of post-2007 is outside the scope of this case study, this comment is

worth acknowledging because the perception of exogenous forces can be misleading

because the interviewees or literature often dismiss or do not acknowledge the negative

aspects of these forces' existence. The comment above reinforces the previously

mentioned concept that "nothing happens in Romania without outside pressure," which

means that there is either an internal ability or desire to generate change. Always looking

to the outside for inspiration or legitimacy for ideas diminishes the role of the citizen and

functional ability of a democracy.

Colonialism

The first phenomenon to explore in a discussion of the three emerging forces is colonialism/neocolonialism. In speaking with interviewees, the word colonialism and its variants were used, but few acknowledged that Romania was officially colonized. There was very little mention of anything before 1945 unless explicitly asked, with the exception of the occasional comment about the Ottomans. For instance, Simona explained that

> in Romania, generally, this is the main problem, bureaucracies, complicated, it's sort of a Turkish bureaucracy, which has a lot of things to show you that you are a small ant in front of the bureaucrat. But they don't have procedures, and whatever they [inaudible]. They have a good will. If they want, they do it. If they don't, they don't do it. That's the problem we have.

However, Simona explained that the word or concept of colonialism is not the best to use to describe Romania's historic "forced" relationships with other countries or empires:

> The best word is not colonialism. It's a kind of if you wish, I would call it kind of well accepted or self – how to say, something that you are willing to accept. It wasn't a colonialism imposed to Romanians. And if we talk on something similar as colonialism, it would be some kind of influence or a set of influences or a system of influences, we openly accepted, and we had all the times this. At least starting from the 19th century, when we can talk in the second part of the 19th century, we can talk on Romania that is already started to becoming a nation state, and a state that has an awareness of statehood, so on and so forth.

Interestingly, this perspective does not acknowledge fully the possibility of Romania's refusal to become a suzerainty of any of the former colonizers, creating the perspective that Romania chose to have these relationships. Interviewee Simona continued:

> Even though we had a German king [early 1900's], I told you that we went towards a French type of – and what was interesting is that the German king never tried to colonize Romania, and to make it a German country, never. It tried to take everything from everything that was very open and very, how to say, a novelty from many other countries, and this was very interesting with the German king that basically shaped modern Romania. But we had all the time this –
>
> *Interviewer: What was his name?*
>
> Interviewee: Charles I, Carol in Romanian. And then all the kings actually did, but he was a German guy, a German official coming as a king of Romania, and he could have done like simply to say that look, this should be – the legislation should be the German, and so on and so forth because I am the king, and this is what I want. No, he didn't do this, and Romania continued to be this French-type of something. So I would say that we had all the times this kind of complex I would call of a small nation that should have a frame of reference.

Therefore, although the King of Romania during the Hapsburg Era was German and installed without choice, Romanians like this interviewee do not consider this to have been colonization. Instead, as Interviewee Simona explained,

> So then, again, coming back to this not colonialism, it's a well accepted – the need for a frame of reference that a small country with a smaller culture feels the need to have somebody bigger to report us to. And this was the French, most of

184

the time, never the Russians. Even in Soviet times, the big opposition was that nobody accepted – so the fact that the Soviet culture, and the Soviet influence did not go through was that culturally…

Even though the Soviets came into Romania after the Yalta conference with tanks and soldiers to establish a formal occupation followed by a Stalinization of the Romanian education system (in which students were required to learn Russian, for example), it is a commonly held opinions in Romania that Romania was not colonized. Instead, it seems that Romanians acknowledge their status as not being among the most powerful or influential countries, and therefore choose, as Interviewee Simona explained below, to have a "frame of reference" once freed from Soviet and subsequently totalitarian rule:

After the '80s, after the '90s, like '89, '90, it was very clear that again, as a smaller country, we needed some kind of frame of reference that was United States and the European Union.

One of the factors to explain this mentality is that, as Interviewee Simona said, "that look, in society, we were not fighters." Raluca explained that the problem is not colonialism but instead the source:

is coming more from inside, without trusting each other and without trusting institutions, we think that, the usual saying, you can't be prophet in your own country, but we really believe that the prophet is only outside of the country and don't trust very much. This was also the case when a lot of auditors came to Romania from outside. They were better placed than ourselves in telling to the administration, look, we think that we have to do that. Well, maybe, but when it was said in a foreign language, better sense to that was there.

Ironically, this comment provides some linkages to the findings that it is partially because of colonialism, to a major extent, that there is a deficit of trust within Romania's borders, and that this lack of trust fosters a continuous dependency on foreign powers or foreign institutions for guidance or, as mentioned, to be a "frame of reference." Moreover, the interviews have brought forth the idea that Romanians often see external as better or more trustworthy and insider "prophets." This combination may set in motion a paradigm whereby trust in domestic ability struggles to gain momentum.

Globalization

In this section, I will explore how the interviewees understood globalization specifically, or some aspect of the concept broadly, before discussing their perspective on the implications for Romania. In the case of Romania and its education system, there were many connected but not necessarily related events that illuminate the impacts of globalization. For example, Interviewee Petre believed that

> if we talk about primary education, I would say that these international tests, the
> PISA, the TIMSS,[34] that we agreed to participate, are a very good indicator for the
> level of performance of students, which is an indicator and which shows
> something. So from this point of view, I think that is it a good opportunity to
> network with other countries and try to benchmark ourselves to their systems. In

---

[34] Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) "assesses how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society" (pisa.oecd.org); Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) "provides reliable and timely data on the mathematics and science achievement of U.S. 4th- and 8th-grade students compared to that of students in other countries" (nces.ed.gov/timss).

higher education, which is closer to my interest and I know more about higher

education, I think that there are two aspects of this problem. First of all, we have

traditionally known universities in certain fields like medicine, for example,

medical schools.

You have students coming from the Middle East, for example, to study and we

have a tradition for that. From Greece, also, and from Africa. We have very good

contacts. We have a lot of students coming to Romania to study in medical

schools in Bucharest and in Cluj, especially.

Based on this perception, the fact that students come from abroad provides the sense that

the education is of high enough quality, and, more to the point, there is international

demand and therefore the schools are internationally competitive, despite performance in

TIMSS and PISA. Speaking about individual countries and their impact on Romania vis-

à-vis globalization, Interviewee Simona provided an overview based on international

influence in the 1990's:

And in '90, so we were not that much interested in what is going on in France, but

most of us were interested in seeing what happens in northern countries, in U.K.,

in United States, Canada, and so on, and we had to learn English.

'93, we started to change somehow the cultural patterns embedded in schools

from the French-type of cultural pattern towards the so-called – here it's called

Anglo-Saxon pattern…

The '90s were a period of huge openness towards the world, an unbelievable one.

No. 2, two words, Anglo-Saxon word, not that much the others, a lot of

experience in, I told to you, American, U.K., Canada, New Zealand, this kind of

stuff, northern countries, very much Finland and so on, Holland. But a very big

openness towards the world, a huge World Bank project, and then general

education policy that was shaped in the Ministry, and that was basically top-down

type, pushed into the system, toward the system from the top to down, and getting

there somehow slowly, slowly, slowly.

Therefore, there was an appetite for external influence. However, the main observation is

that categorizing globalization as negative or positive based on these interviewee's

responses is challenging based on the sparseness of data. However, any comments on the

topic of globalization did not speak to negative influences, but rather missed

opportunities amidst various new opportunities that exist, but these comments were

observational.

Isomorphism

The third emerging theme and force that influenced Romania's transition is

isomorphism. Isomorphism takes many shapes, and has varied impacts on countries like

Romania. While interviewees never uttered the word "isomorphism," which was

expected as I am newly applying this concept to education and transition, they did speak

of a force and phenomena that fits my definition of isomorphism. Petre explained,

most of the people wanted these things for historical reasons, of course.

NATO was, basically, the Americans and we have been waiting for the

Americans since the Second World War to come and save us , and from the Cold

War, of course, we were also waiting for the Americans to come and save us from

Soviet Union, from Russia, basically. And so NATO was perceived as finally the

Americans are going to come and save us. And the European Union was

something different. It was viewed as, let's say, a select club where we want to

get because we are also Europeans. We have the same values as they do, so we

want to be in their club.

It was also perceived as a means of economic prosperity. And we still have pretty

much still high consensus among the new members of the European Union;

Romania is still one of the most optimistic countries, from this point of view,

unlike Poland, for example, or the Czech Republic, where Euro skepticism is

much more powerful than in Romania.

This concept of euroskepticism is particularly interesting because, as explained in the

literature review, the Czech Republic and Poland have stronger democracies and more

robust free-market economies in Romania, and also have a higher degree of

euroskepticism, or concern about outside European influences dictating reform and

possibly negatively impacting culture. As an observation beyond the scope of the

interviews, while euroskepticism may not have a causal relationship between the pace

and depth of transitional progress, it is interesting to note that the countries that did not

need as much external support have progressed further, which may be an indication that

their alternative elite were better equipped to manage the transition. Romania's desire to

be part of the European "club," and attach its frame of reference to a western institution

such as the EU is partially a survival mechanism to distance themselves from Russia and,

perhaps, the Middle East, both symbolically and literally.

While countries like the Czech Republic and Poland remained, as Interviewee

Petre further explained,

more and more skeptical of the EU and its role and the way it can help their

countries. But in Romania, we are still optimistic about it and we still like very

much being members, even though it's becoming harder because we finally need

to do stuff. Until now, we had to declare we did stuff, which was pretty easy. And

now we have to do stuff, so it's becoming harder. The hard work begins, and

we'll see what will happen because it's an ongoing process.

Romania did, perhaps, treat the EU at first like a colonizer, but one they desired to have

by agreeing to reform even before really determining how to actually implement the

reforms. Their desire to actually change seems to be a lesser priority than that of

appearing to change or *being willing* to change, which is partially explained by

Interviewee Petre and the notion that the only true change happened when it was truly

required:

The Bologna Process, for example, that doesn't have such a powerful stick like

NATO or the EU because NATO and the EU are powerful organizations. They

have very strict rules and so on, and they can follow very strictly what you do.

The Bologna Process is more like a gentleman's agreement, let's say, more of an

understanding between countries. If you don't follow the Bologna Guidelines –

they are called Guidelines and Recommendations, they are not compulsory, so if

you don't do things the way they say you should do or it's recommendable for

you to do, there is no punishment directly to you as a state authority or as a

Ministry.

The only thing that happens is that, for example, diplomas are not going to be

recognized in other Bologna Process member countries. For example, I get a

diploma here in social sciences, I want to go and work in France, for example, I

need to pass some exams to accumulate my diploma. If the Bologna Process goes

correctly, then it's supposed to, somehow, bring about official recognitions of all

diplomas in this place, but this has not happened yet, and if it happens and we are

left outside, the Ministry doesn't really have a personal problem with that. It

happened; we will somehow solve it. So from this point of view, I don't think that

reforms were brought about in the same way.

Therefore, as this comment demonstrates, the aesthetics of belonging to the club are

strongly desired, and perhaps without much thought or attention paid to what it will take

to truly follow the guidelines of that club. The consequences of decisions like this are felt

in education, but in different ways. For example, Interviewee Petre said that the impact

was felt strongly in higher education:

I think that there are very big differences between higher education and primary

education, from this point of view, because forces related to them are different,

people are different, and everything is completely a separate story. I think that in

higher education, most of the changes were, somehow, of the reforms that

happened were of the cause of factors that people could not control. For example,

private universities, they put some pressure on the system, they changed

something by just the simple fact that they appeared. And the state had to make

some mechanisms to deal with that.

The Accreditation Law, for example, of '93 was the first thing that happened, and

then in 2006 , we were forced, again, somehow, to change this Accreditation Law

and take into account quality assurance, also, as a topic because it's of interest,

it's part of the Bologna Process, everybody else is doing it. So it was like a peer

pressure thing. And so we had to adopt this, also.

Through a combination of required reformation such as ECTS and voluntary but expected

"peer pressure" reformation such as Bologna, higher education was deeply impacted by

reforms, which will be further discussed in the next chapter. Primary education was a bit

different, as it experienced less of an external impact. Interviewee Petre explained:

In terms of primary education, I think that I'm not sure what to say because it's

not really my field and I'm not really sure what happened, but there, you have a

lot of reforms that happened in a very short time, and often contradicting one

another, and so right now, I'm not really sure what's happening there in primary

education.

Because the EU is "hands off" with primary and secondary education, the impact from

formal isomorphism seems to be less severe.

Some of the positive attributes of isomorphism is helping Romania modernize its

education system. Between the World Bank and EU, various examples arose in the

interviews that demonstrate each organization's isomorphic influence on Romania, and

through various means. Mihai explained that *curriculum* was not even part of the

Romanian vernacular before the World Bank provided expertise for reform:

In two or three years after we entered the institute, our department become a

curriculum department. So we adopted this word [curriculum], which was not

very well known before 1990. And so we became the Curriculum Department,

and very soon, I think that in 1993, or 1994, was designed this project with the

World Bank. And then a lot of activity we've done here in my department was

related to this educational project. Because we were a Curriculum Department, we've been involved in designing the new curricula for all the subjects. Because the philosophy, as I understood…the World Bank don't try to impose a, kind of, let's say, targets.

While curriculum provided a choice, when providing the option for funds, the influence increased: Auralia explained the way in which the World Bank and FAAR [funds that support international exchange] had more stringent requirements upon the acceptance of funds and the signing of the MOU:

Well, you see, World Bank like FAAR, so I put World Bank and FAAR in the same basket. They both tried to use the principle learning by doing. So World Bank said I'll give you loans, but you have to do it according to my rules. So they gave a loan for research, for example, for higher education reform, for things like that, and they imposed the rules, the financial rules, the competition, the evaluation, and things like that.

So it's not the amount of money, of course, for us, the amount of money was like heaven. But basically, it was not the amount of money. The basic principle was that you had to learn day by day how the rules are, and how to obey all the rules.

While the support was restrictive, it was also beneficial according to Interviewee Auralia:

Yes, it was good, but at that stage, it was good. Yes, at that stage. Well, World Bank is not making anything in Romania because Romania became the member of the European Union. World Bank is not dealing with the members of the European Union.

Interviewer: Was Romania able to pay that loan back?

Interviewee: It's paying it back.

Thus, isomorphism is a complicated issue because the reformation necessary for compliance, though forced rather than optional, can nevertheless often support a country in increasing the quality of its education, or at least help progress toward a certain goal. As explained by Interviewee Victor, this type of decision is not without consequence:

I said unfortunately because at the end of the '90s when our social ideal became the European integration, we heard many, many times the explanation that this is the request of the European Union and we should do that. We should give up and leave behind some good issues in the education system because we have to meet the European standards and the European way of teaching, the European way of learning and so on. I think the public perception of the European standards, which was good at the beginning and welcomed at the beginning, became something with no value. Just a reason to comply with something.

I think Bologna was something like that. Most of the teachers and the higher education institutions perceived it as something that has to be done. This is the trend. Not as something that could really provide some benefits to the education system. We have done research on Bologna implementation in Romania, and there are interesting results. One way of rejecting the education reform in general was the way of implementing and starting it from top down to grassroots level. Another issue was that it was implemented in a hurry, like many other European standards or requests, and the institutions couldn't really reflect on how they should transform.

Therefore, the pace of reform was quick, and certain elements may have been ignored or abandoned in favor of becoming members of the EU. What is most challenging, is determining the areas in which isomorphism is almost invisible. As Interviewee Simona explained,

> [e]ven though, you know, the Union does not do that much on education or they do not request, actually, anything in education except – basically, we say that they do not ask anything, but actually, they ask for many things. Because you have the Bologna process, you have the key competencies, and these all are taken over. Somehow, they should be observed by the countries. So I have a study, I don't know in one of these books or some – one book of education policy just appeared last week. I edited it, and I guess that there I have a study on the European Union accession, and I'm reflecting on what happened, actually. My vision is that nothing happened important. We entered the Union, but in education, I don't see a shift of paradigm. So education was actually the first chapter closed, but it was closed in '97, when we had that very revolutionary minister. But this time, it's not that easy because even as a minister, you are a minister in a European Union country, and you should think twice when you do something.

This invisible force of isomorphism is both powerful and challenging to understand. It is best described as being mimetic isomorphism, because of the unwritten nature of the reform direction and unsaid expectations. The challenging aspect of the invisible force of isomorphism is that Romanians act like they have the upper hand. As Interviewee Simona explained

with the Union, I have the feeling that when we go to Brussels, we say, look, yeah, we are okay with Bologna because just we tick the boxes and we report that things are done, so it's not a formal reason. And this happened already in the '50s, when we had something coming from Moscow, and everybody said that, yes, yes, if somebody in Moscow says that there are 8, of course, that the Union is very different from what was before the communist group of countries. But very certain bureaucracy, and there is – in my view, always on education, educational documents, there is a lot of bureaucracy, even this method.

The correlation between the EU and Russia elucidates the underlying notion that colonialism paved the way for institutional isomorphism and the homogenizing effects of organizations such as the EU. This point was also articulated by Interviewee Ana, who said that

it's just the way they've [Romanians] always dealt with outsiders, with the rulers. Basically, the EU is their new ruler, and they give lip service to them, they say what they want to hear, and then they go about business as usual. It's so true with the whole corruption thing.

Overall, it is not possible or necessary to determine if institutional isomorphism is ultimately good or bad in this example, or even understood in this dualistic manner, but it is clear that the power of the influence is more than what Romanians expected, and longer lasting.

Summary of Chapter Findings

To answer the research question "What factors impacted Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?", interviewees concluded that the following factors were critical: 1) domestic factors such as Romania's history and culture, coupled with its nascent political system and colonized mentality, and 2) exogenous factors as they relate to those forces or phenomena that come from beyond Romania's borders. The existence of domestic and exogenous factors, coupled with the interview findings, explain the slow development of a democratic education system in Romania.

Moreover, Interviewee Victor, my interpreter, a Romanian doctor and family cousin, remarked that

> there were jokes about the Americans coming because they have a history of [inaudible] and hope that the Russians would come and have an influence on us. They didn't come, and since then, each year, they hoped the Americans would come, and it became the '80s when we were in school that it had almost become like a joke. The children were interested in the Americans. The joke was that so much time passed, saying that the Americans would come, it almost seemed like a joke. Children were interested in finding out about the Americans.

This point tied into the overall perspective of Romania needing a frame of reference, and how it therefore is susceptible to more powerful, trend-setting countries like France or the United States, which means Romania walks the line between benefitting from exogenous knowledge and losing out on the domestic intellectuals that are the "gold within their own mountains."

CHAPTER V:

RESEARCH FINDINGS, EDUCATION AMIDST TRANSITION

Introduction

Following my exploration of the impact of exogenous forces and the possible

effects of Romania's history and culture within this case study, the second research

question that must be explored is: "What role did education play in Romania's transition

from a totalitarian regime toward democracy?" This question allowed me to engineer a

more specific, example-based exploration of Romania's education system and its role in

the transition between 1989 and 2007.

The interviewee questions delved into many areas, but provided ample

opportunity for interviewees' unsolicited, independent observations—thus filling a need

in a literature that rarely seeks out contributions from practical experts. The major context

for education reform during the transition touched upon the following themes:

democracy-building, curriculum, access, decentralization and teacher education. All of

these topics stem from the fact that Romania transitioned from a totalitarian state toward

a democracy, but it should be noted that many interviewees described this transition as

decentralization. This etymological distinction must be made as it places the emphasis on

transition, not democracy, acknowledging the Romanian perspective that the nation was

decentralizing first, and democratizing second. In the same vein, Romanians often speak

of transitioning toward democracy or decentralizing rather than democratizing. Based on

these interviews, and with awareness of this perception, the discussion to answer my

second research question will first discuss emerging themes from the interviewees'

discussions as they relate to primary and secondary education, then to public higher education and, finally, to private higher education.

Primary and Secondary Education

During the period examined in this case study, Romanian education was supposedly moving toward an education system suited to a democratic state. While most interviewees did not describe education's transition as literally, the following exploration of education's role and examples of what occurred between 1989 and 2007 indicate that it clearly was a system in transition. Whether coordinated or not, Romania was transitioning *toward* democracy and all efforts, whether on the right track or not, were toward that end.

Decentralization of Education

As discussed in the literature review, decentralization itself does not guarantee the intended goals of efficiency and effectiveness in providing citizens with government services if the local administration is not prepared for the responsibility. This finding is particularly true with regard to Romania's decentralization efforts, which are not to be conflated with democratization efforts, as this section will explore. To this point, Interviewee Mona explained two main attributes to consider:

Rural schools [were] not prepared to take ownership. Also, [there are] problems between regions, not just urban-rural. Example, in the Hungarian regions of Romania they are hungry for transform and are the first to arrive to take new

initiatives. Other regions have the opposite problem. The Austro-German section

called Bucovina also has [a] tradition of self-help.

When asked how to remedy this challenge with regard to "ownership" and awareness that

different locales viewed their responsibilities differently, Interviewee Mona responded by

saying that the elite should have

> patience because pushing could lead to political shifts and turbulence. There are
>
> three phases of democratization. Under communism it was education for all. Early
>
> transition it was more political such as rights. Now issue is quality. We don't use
>
> the term "democratization" but rather developing education quality.

This comment is significant because the interviewee is one of the main actors in

education reform and, particularly, in democratic education. These comments by

Interviewee Mona triangulates with the literature review I conducted because while

transition is complicated and three-dimensional, it did have three distinct phases, some of

which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

There interviewees frequently commented on decentralization, sometimes

focusing on the distribution of responsibility from the central to the local government.

Interviewee Petre said that decentralization did not really commence until halfway

through the period of this case study, meaning about ten years had been lost:

> The ideas are before that, but let's say they started around 2000, approximately.
>
> What this decentralization means is that local authorities, like the mayor's office,
>
> take more responsibility in the life of the school. This was translated in Romania
>
> that the mayor's office is responsible for renovating and administrating the school
>
> as a building, and then you had the teachers and the content of the school, the

teachers and the things that they teach, which is still centralized at the Ministry.

So, the Ministry of Education says what teachers go to what school, what they

teach, in terms of programs and curriculum, so it's a centralized decision.

 Therefore, infrastructure maintenance was distributed to local authorities, while the bulk of responsibility remained in the hands of the Ministry. Interviewee Petre continued:

This has also generated a lot of problems because usually, in small, rural

communities, there are two centers of power, the mayor and the headmaster of the

school. And if they don't get along, then the mayor doesn't give money to the

school anymore, and you have the headmaster and the teachers, which are being

paid from the Ministry and they go to the school, but the school is in really bad

shape, the building. And now we're in a situation that 90 percent of Romanian

schools are not meeting European criteria, which we had to adopt, finally, in

2009, because it's been two years we are members now, and we have new criteria

for the living conditions, basically, in the school.

This comment spoke to the challenges in decentralization: quality control and

consistency. The local authorities were not able to maintain the same quality standards as

during centralized education, which undermined the efforts of decentralization, and may

have prompted questions about its value from those who were frustrated with the slow

process.

Another aspect of decentralization was the shift of not only responsibility but also

power and authority. This concept was discussed by the interviewees as "autonomy."

While autonomy largely related to higher education, its legal precedence now represented

a symbolic shift which impacted all levels of schooling. Interviewee Mona explained the process as impacting education in the following manner:

> [f]or political reasons one of the first needs was autonomy. University autonomy was a principle but changed at a slow pace. How universities are autonomous but have quality control and accreditation. In 1997 schools became more autonomous... more autonomous [from the] administration. Universities run on local budgets. Slogan [is] "money for students."

This step represented the first in decentralization: a shift in responsibility and a shift in power. The next step would be 'rebounding' to the same level of quality as before the shift; the final step would be an increase in quality—theoretically.

Democracy and Trust

One of the major challenges in decentralizing was that by decentralizing toward becoming a democracy, the Ministry of Education must trust the local government to implement reform and take on additional responsibilities. One of the obstacles was that agencies and ministries are comprised of people, people who were severely impacted by the totalitarian regime, with a resulting deficit of trust that has carried over into the new democracy. This section will provide an overview of various perspectives on the issue of trust, followed by examples such as the lobby law and lack of public integration with policy-making, and how these factors impacted education and its role in the transition.

One of the carryovers from the totalitarian period was the reality that those in the Securitate and those who supported their efforts, the informers, were still in governmental positions after 1989. This type of person was categorized by Interviewee Petre as

the people who did the crimes, the beatings, the arrests, the tortures and so on, and then you had the so-called informers, which are normal people with normal jobs, only periodically, they reported to the secret police what their colleagues were doing, what they have been writing, for example, where they keep their hidden writings that are not meant for public and who says what and who goes where and who meets with whom. Practically, they were agents of the secret police because they had a signed contract with the secret police.

Those who had the ability, post-coup, tried to cover up the names of those who were informers, but increasingly, the names were leaked, according to Interviewee Petre:

and what happens now is that we have, slowly after 1989, very slowly, and only in the past year, this has become public and in the public eye, we have the files of the old secret police, which are being guarded by an institution, of course, because we don't want to lose them or things might happen. And periodically, we find files of people who are public figures or members of the academia, which are very known, publicly, because they write books, they are very known and very admired teachers, in a way.

Therefore, what exists now is a paradigm of what can be called a political witchhunt, but names are only exposed for political gain, often to discredit opponents during elections —there is not a policy of overall transparency of these names. The very manner in which this process occurs represents the signfiicant mistrust and continued secrecey that undermines the Romanian democracy. As Interviewee Petre went on to say, "those people are still in their jobs," and, overall, "this part of their past is completely ignored";

the fact that an overall purging has not occurred, or at alternatively, an expunging of the records, casts a shadow on the transition.

Another interviewee connected the idea of the trust deficit with external reseach, and therefore showed an awareness of the issue at both a practical and theoretical level. Interviewee Raluca said that the challenges in reform are

> mainly, my explanation of that is that as Fukuyama discovered, the lack of trust in between individuals, it continues to be so high that we would prefer to refer to models coming from abroad, rather than trusting models from inside. So then you need to go back to all the whole social network that you have in the country and to try to cure, to some extent, what is there and there.
>
> And then, speaking about, again, the result of Fukuyama's studies about the trust in institutions, which is even worse than the trust in individuals, then you can understand which level of democracy we are speaking here about. With lot of people, they are reading in our days and reading Putnam and the way that he is describing democracy in the States, and then with all the other authors and with the deficit of democracy we are facing in Europe, then a lot of people are speaking that defending the current situation in Romania, saying but also in other places the situation is not that good. So then you are always in between. But for me, building democracy, it is part of the cure.

Key to building this democracy is education, but while the questions I asked of interviewees pertained to education, the issue of trust kept recurring as a cultural issue that must be dealt with on many levels and from many angles. Interviewee Raluca continued, saying that

you can't really cure the population, the people, and if something else is to be

done, why not? But let's first be sure that we are able to walk on our feet and to

think with our minds and to live together, and then we can, maybe, look for

another kind of regime that is going there. Still, speaking about going back,

technical and vocational education should work together with enterprises. I need

an individual as a school manager able to communicate, to enter in a dialogue, to

have this capacity of negotiating for the benefit of the public, rather than

individual benefit. So then how this are fitting with the corruption that there is in

society? For the benefit of whom they are negotiating?

The interviewee goes on to provide a solution to these questions:

So we are losing just wasting our effort and time for rebuilding trust, rather than

saying, okay, by merit will continue because we want, for example, to introduce

now the financing of the schools. It will be something like 5 to 10 percent paid to

schools for their results, performance-based funding. But how we are going to do

that if the civil servants will not be allowed to be paid? That's why being in a

high is not always a good sign.

Hence, the inherent lack of trust, as previously discussed, is a problem carried over from

communism or totalitarianism, and tackling it is complicated. Interviewee Raluca

concluded this point in the following exchange:

Interviewer: You think this lack of trust comes from the Communist era?

Interviewee: I'm absolutely sure because with the many Securitate, people you

never know with whom you are speaking.

Even in post-coup Romania, one is never sure "with whom [one] is speaking," because Romania never purged its totalitarian past via a true revolution, and maintains enough overlap with the previous regmine in terms of those who hold political positions that it is challenging for the population at large to have a culture regarding trust. These issues are nationwideand indirectly impact education, especially as Romania continues to decentralize and responsibilities and power change hands.

Reform and Culture

Part of the challenge related to democracy and mistrust is the location of the issue atthe personal and cultural level, not merely the institutional level. A discussion of findings from interviewees on the subject of reform and culture will partially address this issue, and will provide a deeper understanding of both why and how the reform took place in the manner in which it did.

One of the challenges in the necessary shift in culture during post-coup Romania was answering the question, "toward what end and toward what design are we transitioning?" Since an overarching plan was not in place, any changes in culture were viewed with skepticism, especially in education. Interviewee Simona explained that

> in the communist education is that the surface was communist, but the profound part, the culture, the educational culture, was a very serious, profound French-type of stuff. [In] '93, we started to change somehow the cultural patterns embedded in schools from the French-type of cultural pattern towards the so-called – here it's called Anglo-Saxon pattern.More pragmatic going towards

outcomes, competencies, skills, so you know, the typical Anglo-Saxon things,

which is much more functional than the French one, in my view.

However, one of the challenges was that the political elite and some of the population, according to this interviewee, did not know the sources from which Romanian education evolved. Interviewee Simona continued:

people wouldn't understand this, and you tried to change the cultural pattern of

this country, and that was when I really realized then after the discussion, one of

these members of the parliament, this kind of nationalistic guy was like pointing

me, saying that you intend to change the cultural pattern of this country.Currently,

if you take the cultural and educational elite, nobody goes back saying that their

background is the French-type of background.

In the difficulties in this scenario are twofold: 1) to what extent was Romania's education truly based on a French style of education, and how much of that basis was destroyed under totalitarianism; and 2) what should change to meet the demands of the new Anglo-Saxon design of outcomes based reform?. The current belief, as Interviewee Simona explained, was that

people are interested to give a lot of knowledge, and then all teachers think that

with lot of knowledge, so at a certain point, students will somehow gather the

skills they would need, and they can manage in life. This is the vision.

And the second meter for Romanians was in '93 that look, we have all these

Olympics. When we send Romanian kids to the mathematics Olympics, we are

the first. We have the gold medals. Nobody thinks that these are two students

over-trained by ten teachers here in Bucharest.

With Romania's out-dated focus on a banking methodology of instruction coupled with a misunderstanding of national performance based on the skewed results at the mathematics Olympics, it is necessary for Romania to assess its true culture, by assessing the quality of its education system to accurately inform policy creation and implementation as well as curriculum design and pedagogical practices.

Another aspect of culture to be explored was the culture of community, which fed into an understanding of those aspects of democracy that are not required or forced, but are crucial to the quality of life in a democracy. This culture of community is strongly supported by volunteering, which is a new concept for post-coup Romania. However, one of the challenges to support volunteering and the forging of community, which in turn supports schooling, is the notion of character. Interviewee Daniela, in the following exchange, parsed character in post-coup Romania, starting with what education before 1945 entailed, and then during communist and post-coup education:

Interviewee: I think that the education system was smart. It created extraordinarily resilient characters; it built character. And like now – even – and like after '89.

Interviewer: Yes, so character suffers.

Interviewee: Character suffers. Education in moral character suffers. So in that respect, the education system passed before '45, was a builder of real character, right?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Whereas now – after – whereas – during the Communist period it was destroyed and during the '45 – passed '45 to – blah, blah – was during the Communist period was destroyed. And after '89, it was irrelevant because nobody

wanted to build character; everyone wanted to build competencies or knowledge.

Right? So very different approach.

With a history of charcter education prior to 1945, there were lingering elements which impacted post-coup Romania. Certainly, the indoctrination approach to character building was hollow due to the motivcation of character being for the benefit of the state, not the individual, and certainly not the community. As a result, the concept of volunteering, which can be a proxy for understanding one's attitude toward one's community, was explored in the following exchange with Interviewee Raluca:

there are, also, other values that I think that are in the process of being redefined. For example, volunteers. If you are telling someone in Romania let's volunteer for that, again, this will be an immediate question. I remember a lot of campaigns that we did for environment purposes, starting with lot of public individuals, public persons. For example, let's go for having a tree in front of the house or I don't know what.

In the respective day, when it was the day of the planet, for example, because of the television and the image, everyone is volunteering. After, nothing. It is not an attitude, this is what I'm saying. It is not part of it. It is not educated.

Interviewer: It's not part of the culture?

Interviewee: No. No. They don't have the feeling of belonging to their respective behavior. It's not there. It's not part of it.

Interviewer: Belonging to the community?

Interviewee: Yeah. Just for doing for the public good. Because it is also because of – my opinion is, and there might be, also, some other explanations that

could come to my mind, but right now, I think that the major problem is the status

of the property. Before '89, everything was public, meaning nothing. Protecting

what? You had nothing in your hands. Then it started the process of giving back

the land, and now, we are judging a lot and we are observing a lot of crimes

because they feel owners of the land. But we do not, necessarily, feel, yet, as

being owners of our community.

Based on this exchange, it is clear that one of the byproducts of individual propoerty is

individual responsibility. As with many aspects of a transition, this information does not

come in any kind of a "democratic handbook guide to citizenship." Moreover, the focus

of democratic education, as will be further discussed, is on the theoretical level, not on

how the individual "acts" in a democracy. Again, there was a history of volunteering that

existed prior to 1945 that can be looked to in support of the growth of volunteering of

Romania, as Interviewee Raluca explained:

Interviewee: Before '45, I think it was a strong feeling of community. A lot of

people being proud of their communities, and I remember, also, the name of our

street is the name of the minister of education that, in the middle of 19th century,

created the rural school.

Interviewer: And that name is?

Interviewee: Spiru Haret. He also invested something in respect of the concept

of the house school building should stay, and he put a small house also for the

school director in rural area just offering the model to the other citizens. The way

that the school director is behaving, the way the priest is behaving should remain

the model for the small community, for the small village. So those days, they had their values.

Ironically, Spiru Haret, as previously mentioned, is the name of Romania's largest private higher education university—a type of university that, at least symbolically, does not espouse the public good. Moreover, the legacy of Spiru Haret, a Horace Mann-type character believing in education for the masses and not just the elite, had laid the groundwork that would have supported a flourishing democracy in Romania. Unfortuantely, during the totalitarian era, as Interivewee Raluca said in the following discussion, those democratic values in existance were suppressed:

> *Interviewer: So it's almost as if they were dormant during this time of totalitarianism. Is that a good word to use?*
>
> Interviewee: Yeah.
>
> *Interviewer: During this time, they had to subvert and hold back these feelings. Now they can bring them back. So that's an interesting point, there is an element present, of course, mostly with the older generation in Romania, where some of these democratic values, community, perhaps, you could say, is a democratic value, they were there. It's a matter of rebuilding and rekindling, bringing back to life these feelings. So it's not starting from scratch, starting from zero. You're starting from –*
>
> Interviewee: It's not starting from scratch if we are reading books about it. If the society, if the current people really look for valuing what it was in the tradition, this is another question. Do we take enough advantage of having a tradition?

Finally, the interviewee brought up the idea of not starting from a "blank slate," a recurring and emerging theme in this study. There are aspects of this blank slate that are challenging, such as the forces to preserve a false sense of culture, but there are also postive aspects of the blank slate relating to traditions and attitudes that existed prior to 1945.

One of the ways to help increase the momentum of Romania's cultural shift to embrace democracy fully is to become more exposed. For example, one observation of Romania based on my experience with the people and upon my trip was how proud Romanians are of their culture and heritage—it is, perhaps, what sustained them and held them together through their many colonizations and long history. However, this pride decreases the appetite for comparitive studies, especially given the "Olympic" mentality that their system was paramount and competitive with those of the best industrialized countries. To this point, Inteviewee Raluca discussed the idea of looking to other countries that experienced a totalitarian regime to build an international community of support:

> first, I have to say that there are a lot of cooperation between what is it in
> Romania happening and in Latin America. There were a lot of similarities from
> different perspectives. And in 2006, because of the OECD had the first Forum on
> Education in Chile, I have been there and I had a chance of discussing after the
> forum with the authorities about how education is going on there.
> And I was so ashamed because I went there with my preconceptions,
> prejudgments about what Latin America is about, which of course is not the same,
> all the countries are not the same, and I learned there about the Pact on Education

they did and it was done, if I'm not wrong, in '98, I think they did it, and has been

kept. They did it for 15 years, and it has been kept. And I said why not? Let's

try. So again, you have to have –

Interviewer: They're coming from a totalitarian regime to a –

Interviewee: That's it. If they did it [we can].

By exposing themselves and trying to overcome their pride, without sacrificing the

elements of their culture that are their bond, the Romanians can best utilize their

education system by borrowing and sharing ideas with the international community in a

truly relevent manner.

If this path of comparison is not taken, what will continue to happen may just be

what occurred during this case study: a lot of change, but not all change for the better.

Interviewee Raluca explained thisusing the analogy of the road:

Romanians love a lot of change, not necessarily for specific purpose. I don't

know why, for example, because if you change the name of the streets, saying that

those are belonging to the totalitarian period and you do not want them any longer

to be here, but when you are changing an acceptable name with another

acceptable one, and for this you are paying a lot because everyone should change

the IDs and things like that, I'm not able to tell you why we are changing.

Interviewer: To use the road analogy, we were talking about if you change the

street names, the road still needs to go down the same direction. And what you're

hoping is that it can have a longer term direction.

Interviewee: This is what I really hope. I think, really, that if having a sort of a

pact on a longer term – and it would be a shame to change the road because we

are working very much for the image. So once having this agreement on long

term, they are just going to bring, for example, the nuances of the respective party

that is the leading party or the coalition, which if fine, again. It's normal to be

there. But you do not touch the core, the substance because there are some issues

no one will be, for example, against building democracy.

By tapping into the "substance" of what is needed for building a democracy, individuals

from any political party in power can claim victories while enacting a common plan of

decentralization and democratization, instead of sometimes conflicting or poorly

organized changes. These substantive changes can then address the underlying impact of

culture and shift the expectations and attitudes from a "from the state" mentality to a

"from the people" mentality. To achieve this change, however, specific reforms in

democratic education must occur, as will be explained in the following section.

Democratic Education

　　　　Having reported the interviewees' comments as they relate to decentralization, the

following will be a discussion of the interviewees' responses as they related to

democratic education. Specifically, in some instances, interviewees discussed changes or

reforms that related to democratic education as an end, in addition to themes such as

democracy, trust and teacher education. While the significantly important topics of

education's role in nation-building and social reproduction were not adequately addressed

in this exploratory case study in the context of these interviews, subsequent studies on

these two topics would build upon the foundation of this study and other's work in this

area.

While the overarching theme of the reform was decentralization as it was previously defined and framed by the Romanian interviewees, decentralization had the potential to focus on fostering a more democratic country via a democratic education system. One of the major impetuses for Romania to install a democratic education component to its curriculum was the Bologna Accords of 1999. While not compulsory, the cost of not following these Accords would have jeopardized Romania's perceived development as a nascent democratic country. Still, these Accords were not as prescriptive as necessary to help guide a country like Romania which lacks experience with democracy. To help provide clarity on Bologna's impact, Interviewee Petre provided a perspective on the relationship between the Bologna Accords and democratic education:

> I think you can say that, but if you read the country reports, Romania has made, every two years – for the Bologna Process because we had to do it because it's part of the process – every two years at the Minister's Meeting in Berlin, Prague, London, and so on, each country presents its own report. If you look at that report, you would see that most of the changes that have been done were in the structural, institutional functioning of things and not in the content of democratic citizenship is something related to content more than institutional framework...
> So in terms of content, it's all relative…you have social science universities, for example, where you could say that students are trained for and they receive information and knowledge about what it means to be a citizen, what rights you have, what a democracy is and so on. Then you have the polytechnic universities, for example, where there is no such information because it is not relevant to the

engineering field. So they consider it why should a future engineer learn about

democracy and citizenship rights and so on?

Overall, an emerging trend for democratic education is the idea that democracy is a

structural system with reform focusing on the systems themselves more than the

citizenry. The trend in higher eduation as outlined above by Interviewee Petre is not

without exception, however:

on the other hand, for example, I know of faculty in the area of engineering

studies who have, as an optional course, political science or citizenship and

democracy, something related to the civic activities of the – and so from this

point of view, things are rather okay, I think. You have the freedom to choose

courses.

While there may be outliers, as mentioned by Interviewee Petre, where a faculty member

may encourage or provide an optional citizenship course, the overall opinions of the

interviewees was that this was rare. For a country that is heavily focused on mathematics

and engineering, i.e., a narrow curriculum, this informal approach to civic education can

be problematic because knowledge would not be learned elsewhere within the system. It

is worth noting, however, that much of democratic education in most countries occurs in

primary and secondary education, so its minimal existance in Romania's higher education

system is not necessarily alarming.

However, in regards to primary and secondary eduation, it was challenging to get

a clear answer about democratic education aside from the structural changes. Even when

meeting with one of the most influential creators of Romania's modern democratic

education system, the focus was placed on decentralization, not democratization. When

not focused on decentralization or structural changes, the focus was more on the theoretical and abstract, not on individual empowerment or individual responsibility—or character. Interviewee Petre characterized democratic education in primary education as follows:

> in primary education, you have civic education, which is compulsory, and where you theoretically learn what is the state, what is democracy, what is a citizen, what laws you have, discrimination is not nice, you have to tolerate – so in the third and fourth grade, you have civic education…And then you go into the seventh grade at 14 years old and you have this civic education again. And then in high school, you have one year of high school some social sciences, which is economics, philosophy, logics, and sociology. And each year of high school, you do one of those.

When asked if democracy was seen as something one can teach as a course and not taught as part of culture or translated from theory to practice, Inteviewee Petre answered that:

> no, it's a course. You learn what is democracy, what are human rights, what is the state. You learn definitions.
>
> *Interviewer: So it's more technical, not personal ?*
>
> Interviewee: I think so, yeah.

The technical aspect of democratic education has other challenges related to what is taught and what is learned, and more specifically, what is expected to be taught based on the curriculum and what the teachers emphasize and omit. Interviewee Mihai explained that there is

unfortunately, it is a very big gap between curriculum and competencies; students

proving in several moments in one…the problem of implementation was very

difficult, and it is considered, probably, that this major educational reform doesn't

have too much success because the strategy of implementation was not very well

done.

Based on this interviewee's contribution, one of the challenges for providing a stronger

democratic education was due to poorly implemented reforms. More specifically,

however, Interviewee Mihai went on to explain why this may be the case:

teacher(s) in the civic education are very well trained , and there are a lot of

projects, especially with the United States, in the field of education – civic

education.

Interviewer: So where is the disconnect, or the – do you think?

Interviewee: I think that also motivation, also – I don't know.

Interestingly, this particular interviewee, who echoed a few of the other interviewees, put

the focus of the gap between what is taught and what is learned on the student. This

emerging theme of pointing figures to various actors or parties within the system is

common in many countries. However, in Romania's case, blaming the student for a lack

of competency does provide a satisfactory reason for low student motivation—could lack

of motivation be due to lack of focus or respect for the curriculum in its own right?

Other interviewees felt that *civic education,* used interchangeably in this study

with *citizenship education* or *democratic education*, was sufficient and was adequately

addressed early in the transition. Interviewee Simona explained that

actually, in '90, '91, probably, civics was the first thing that was introduced like civic education.

Then sometimes, you know, I don't know if this kind of civic education also had very much, if we refer to education, but in the last at least five, six years, seven years, the fact that Romanians traveled very much, would help the whole democratic process more than all civic education together for 20 years.

Therefore, according to this interviewee, democratic education was not a critical component of learning how to operate within a democracy or how to contribute to that democracy's continual improvement. Instead, this interviwee explained that "education has an important role, but you know, in Romania, when we invent subjects, they suddenly become very much knowledge based." While this interviwee felt that the subject was invented, or as the comment was intended, introduced, it was primarily based on an "American type of civic education" because there were a small handful of principle architects of the Romanian democratic education system who had conducted work with some American universities. When asked how there was such a disconnect between this allegedly American-style civic education and student competency, Interviewee Simona expressed that

when these nice textbooks and things go down to schools, then they tend to become – very quickly to become this very didactic thing where people teach that this is the definition of democracy, this is the definition of being a citizen...And so if you learn the definition, and you don't understand what is behind…

Another emerging theme may partially explain or contextualize this disconnect between education borrowing and implementation. In a previous section, one interviewee

explained how connected the Romanian education system was to the French system, and yet the output of the Romanian system is decidedly not French. Similarly, if the roots of the democratic education system is an American system, and the output is decidedly not American, it seems that there is a uniquely Romanian [narrow] correlation between how external systems, curricula, or concepts are interpreted or implemented. Whether fault lies upon the teachers, the books, the students, or some combination, it is clear that this factor must be explored in a future study.

Impact of Education Policy & Law

A central topic for this study is the impact of education policy and law because these factors provided a legal and functional framework for the transition. While the timing, quality, thoroughness and efficacy of these policies and laws can be disputed, they are critical components of a democratic country. As discussed in the section on democratic education, if the citizenry are not adequately prepared to operate within a democracy, education policy and law can both bear some of the blame and provide a possible solution. For example, reforms passed in 1995, namely the Education Law of 1995, served to provide a framework for subsequent education reform and simultanesouly addressed challenges that existed between 1989 and 1995. This tendency to both attempt to to resolve past challenges while looking to the future may be one reason that the Romanian government passed so many reforms between 1989 and 2007. Some interviewees blame the frequency of reform for challenges in the education system. Others blame the "see-saw" nature of the reform undoing and redoing policies based on the political party, resulting in a lack of momentum or ability to longitudinally compare

student performance over time. Finally, transparency remains a central challenge of education policy and law as it relates to informing the citizenry on upcoming referenda; how laws were created or are meant to be implemented; or how previous laws or policies were evaluated and deemed ineffective.

With regard to transparency, Interviewee Petre illuminated the way in which the Romanian government is—or more accurately, is not—transparent:

the government is trying to have transparent and publicly disputed, let's say, policies and so on, but usually, most of the decisions are not very transparent and not all the time the political process is influenced, let's say, by the civic society or other actors in the life. I'm talking here not only about NGOs, for example, I'm also talking about labor unions or employers' associations and so on. So the influence coming from the civic society on the political class is not yet very big, and this may be, also, because lobby[ing], for example is not yet accepted and officially recognized as a form of influencing policy in Romania. So you don't have a lobby law, you don't have official lobby groups.

The disconnect between civil society and the creation of policy and law possibly represents a byproduct of totalitarianism and lack of alternative elite—democracy in Romania seems to be status quo, as previously mentioned. If the citizenry are not engaged intentionally in the policy or law-making process, and decisions are made without their input, the process remains elite-driven. While citizen apathy could be cited as one reason for a lack of civic engagement, if there is not a public component of the policy or law-making process, the government is intentionally omitting their input.

Moreover, as Interviewee Raluca explained, it is necessary for law-making to hold a public referendum:

> It is possible because there are, according to the law interests on the transparency of the decision-making process, you have to have 30 days, allowing people to look to a draft, make their reactions. You could also organize another way of consultation, not necessarily through the website. But you are obliged to open a forum for debate.

Interviewees commented that the website referendum might be posted "last minute" to avoid citizen input and decrease the likelihood of legislative defeats. Therefore, the laws on transparency and civic engagement may need to be reevaluated to engage citizens in the law-making process, which may support implementation among other beneficial results.

This concept of no-lobby law is also a major point on which to focus this discussion of education policy and law. Interviewee Petre explained that this law is

> not in the constitution. There is no reference to lobby whatsoever…there is a law that somehow limits lobby, so you cannot have the name, lobby group. You can do that activity, like, for example, an NGO can have the functions of a lobby group, but they cannot name themselves a lobby group.

Regardless of the name, there was a decidedly small representation of the citizenry outside of government as it relates to education policy and law. What was the impetus for repressing the right to lobby? Interviewee Petre believed that it was

> not because they opposed it, but because it implied very large amount of laws that needed to be changed, and ultimately, of mentality that needed to, somehow, be

changed, to somehow shape the way people thought about stuff. And there were a

number of things that we had that Romania was obliged to do, and which we did,

reluctantly, and this is one of the reasons legislation, for example, in certain fields

is not being implements in Romania.

Therefore, the right to lobby and the act of lobbying was seen by the elite who created the

constitution as something that would slow down or impede reform—or at least reform in

the way in which they wished to create it and along the timeline they wished to follow.

The right to lobby is certainly not without legal loopholes that enable financially well-

supported parties to abuse power. However, to suppress the right to lobby results in the

diminishing of the role of the citizenry. One of the byproducts of this issue can be

explained with the example of discrimination law. Interviewee Petre expressed that in

> the field of gender equality...in Romania, there is no kind of discrimination and
>
> this is punished [according to law].
>
> And then you have the practice of discrimination, for example, in hiring people,
>
> you have still practices of discrimination, either by gender, ethnic in some cases,
>
> and there is no reaction from the state. I mean that the law is not being
>
> implemented. Formally, you can go and complain. There is a government – it's
>
> called the National Council Against Discrimination – you can go there and submit
>
> a complaint, but they have no legal power. They can issue some kind of
>
> recommendation, and then you can go with that recommendation to the tribunal,
>
> so it's a very lengthy process. And also, you need to know the way the system
>
> works, which normal people don't.

Certainly not every law or policy in every democracy works flawlessly. In this case, however, in a country where the issue of feminism has not yet been formally broached, policy and law are not leading in the transition process, and the gap between the creation of the law and policy and its intended effect remains wide. This is encouraged by the fact that exogenous institutions like the EU are content to see that Romania has, for instance, a law prohibiting discrimination; these institutions generally do not follow up to see if the law is enforced or if discrimination has, in fact, diminished. Therefore, the potential for substantive change is diminished: Romania may have met minimum accession requirements without actually changing or advancing attitudes and behaviors.

What makes this particular issue of policy and law more challenging and troublesome is the way in which the judicial system was founded. Interviewee Petre explained that

> the judicial system in Romania is not based on, like in the States, on previous cases. It's based on a code of laws, which was invented, let's say, by Napoleon in France and exported around Europe. And you have this very large and inflexible system. Membership to the European Union, somehow, assumes that you try to make this system more flexible, and you start governing through public policies and not laws, you start governing through initiative and dialogue and so on with private actors, with civic society, lobby groups, and so on.

This reality placed a very strong burden on law due to its emphasis over policy and value over implementation. A major byproduct of this reality is that instead of interpreting the laws differently, and drafting updated or modified supporting policies, the Romanian government simply passes new laws. The legal framework is always shifting and remains

unclear to those who are not informed, but to what extent this is intentional as a political

tool for retaining power is unclear. Unfortunately, this is an example where an

organization like the EU could step in and provide guidance, especially for the institution

of education which needs momentum and consistency to support quality. However, as

Interviewee Petre concluded, there was no relationship between the passing of the

Education Law of 1995 and the fact that Romania applied to enter the EU in 1995

because

> education is not a part of EU membership. There was no laws, no compulsory
>
> stuff we had to do. So education has no connection to the European Union. There
>
> is the Bologna Process, which is not related to the European Union membership
>
> because in the Bologna Process, you have countries from Europe, but you also
>
> have Georgia, for example, and Albania and so on, so it's a European process, but
>
> not linked to the European Union as an organization. So from this point of view,
>
> there is no connection between EU and the Law of Education. I think it's just a
>
> coincidence in time.

When asked if there was a symbolic connection, Interviewee Petre was decidedly clear in

responding

> no. I think we needed a new law for education, first of all, because you had a lot
>
> of things that developed, especially in higher education, over that period of time.
>
> You had this very large number of private universities that appeared. You have a
>
> previous step was in 1993, when we passed the Accreditation Law for Higher
>
> Education Institution...[which] limited to the right of the university to admit
>
> diplomas and to function as a higher education institution. But the Law of

Education in 1995 is a very good one because it clearly sets the autonomy of

higher education institutions, which was needed for democratic purposes, of

course.

Therefore, concurrent efforts related to policy and law were underway in Romania—

those related to EU accession and those already being conducted as part of the domestic

agenda—and there was not always a direct relationship to them, and the influence of the

EU was almost too late to provide the guidance that Romania may have needed,

especially since the Law of 1995 was perceived as the "backbone" of all subsequent

education law according to Interviewee Mihai. While the EU may not be to blame, this

complexity exposes the challenges that countries face when transitioning toward

democracy.

After the Education Law of 1995, the next major policy that impacted Romanian

education originated from the Bologna Accords in 1999. Interviewee Raul explained the

differences in the time periods as follows:

Bologna started in 1999. So previous to that period, we were making changes

because we wanted to reform the higher education system. In the pre-1999 period,

lots of the changes were made at the legislative level, so we managed to pass

laws, but it was very difficult in terms of implementation. So, many of them

ended up being implemented at a later stage. Now after 1990, not immediately, all

these Bologna principles entered in our reforms, but I would say that after 2005,

most of the things are done according to Bologna principles and Bologna

requirements and yes, at the present, it does affect to a large extent, and we are

doing whatever is necessary to align to and have results.

Therefore, while reforms were being passed on one timeline, implementation was occurring on a slower timeline, which speaks to another major theme of policy and law: the frequency of reforms and how it impacted the process. Interviewee Raul felt that the concurrent Bologna reforms, while seeming to lack positive attributes, actually was timed well with domestic reforms in Romania:

> my opinion is that the fact that we are in the reforming process, at the same time was the new requirements from the Bologna process; it comes at our advantage because I think that it's much more easier here in Romania because we were in the changing process, transformation process anyhow. So now we transform according to some of the new requirements, as opposed to the old Europe where people all of a sudden, they're asked to make the changes. So you know what, attitudinally, it's much more easier for us.

Therefore, the notion that too much change or overly frequent changes can only adversely impact a country does not take into account a country's history. For Romania, this time period represents what I have referred to in my literature review as a "policy window," which is Kingdon's (2003) concept that there is a particular time when reform is more likely due to the "appetite" or "attitude" of the population or elite who pass the reform. The alternative, therefore, would be too little political and legal reform, leaving the education system without any kind of framework from which it can participate in the democratic system. So, even though as Interviewee Raul stated, "people did not know how to implement [university] autonomy," or the plethora of lesser changes that were passed following 1995 and 1999, one could argue that at least the legislation is in place for when this concept is better understood.

In addition to the frequency of reform and the lack of legal transparency, there is a third and final emerging theme regarding policy and law, which I have called a "see-saw" political game. In such a game, every ministerial change or newly elected prime minister, new policies or laws are created to countermand the previous political party, thereby undermining the momentum of reform and reducing the ability to compare the impact of reforms longitudinally. While as Interviewee Victor stated, "the legislation was not harmonized" with regard to higher education reform and the EU regarding ECTS and credits, the challenge with "see-saw" policy was primarily domestic in origin. Interviewee Victor commented that

in 2002, when another Ministry came, some changes – they said the optional subjects were not a success because teachers were not prepared to design their own curriculum, which was false, in a way. Maybe it was thorough in the first year, but after four years of doing this, they learned, and they said well, it is too much liberty, so we have to reduce the optional part of the curriculum to 5 percent from 20. It was smaller in the first grade and increasing with the high school.

After a decade of high-level reforms, the change in 2002 signified a focus on more micro-level, grass-roots reforms. However, the shift in focus almost swung away from macro to the point of neglect, and seemed not to factor in the macro-policy when passing micro-policy such as the example above with teacher input in curriculum. Part of the challenge in this case is the power of the Ministry, as Interviewee Simona outlined:

You have subjective things in educational change, pressure of public intellectuals, and the legislation, I would say that this would be the order. Subjective things, then the law, the law is older, but the legislation – don't think that the legislation

is the one that moves things in a country like Romania, not yet. This is my

opinion. This is my experience for many years, so people are very important. If

this minister wants to do things, she can do these things with or without

legislation. Of course, she cannot break the law, but she would put in the

legislation what she feels that she needs.

This interviewee's contribution spoke to the power of the elite, which will be discussed in

a subsequent section, and how the minister can almost operate outside of policy and yet

somehow within the law, as explained further by Interviewee Simona:

No, it was a kind of neutral legislation that – how can I define it? The '95 Law of

Education was one that didn't stop you to do things, but it didn't encourage you to

do. It wasn't so in the legislation you can have educational laws that, how to say,

stabilize the system or legislation that – or laws to the system to move forward. I

would say that the '95 was one that tried to stabilize the system.

This comment almost undermined other interviewee's perspective on the power of policy

and legislation, except that the nuance to consider is the ease with which ministers can

change policy or law to create a framework within which his or her respective ideology

or political aspirations can manifest. For example, Interviewee Simona continued,

So that it's a framework, and then there are regulations for applying the

legislation that are very detailed. In Romania, the legislation sometimes is very,

very detailed, and they put in the law things that are not matter of a law. For

instance, which are the subject in – you should have your baccalaureate, which is

not a matter of legislation because this should be changed, this can be changed.

So the legislation should be considered…with a certain skepticism, and yesterday

one of the questions just to show you how people understand legislation, here, the

minister already announced certain things that she will take measures from

tomorrow on, let's say, on the so-called dynamics of the educational person, so

that how people will be.

The "dynamics of the educational person" refers to the power of the elite in operating

within a strict framework that appears rigid but is in fact malleable to each

administration, which undermines the power of the Education Law of 1995 or the

Bologna Accords in that their interpretation can be severely impacted by subsequent laws

that either interpret the original law differently or impact the way in which the law is

implemented—or not.

However, not every law is always passed by a minister. One interviewee, Auralia,

spoke of a lack of success in passing

a new piece of legislation, [which] said we need an umbrella, and some of the law

for higher education, the law for undergraduate, and so on, continuous education,

these are the pieces of legislation that's a general instruction. But we did not

succeed imposing, for example, a board for the university. We tried to do it.

Without divulging the interviewee's role in this piece of legislation, this umbrella law

would have attempted to foster some unity within the education system as the reform

process and "see-saw" political games have fractured the system to a point where unity,

one could argue, is necessary to better understand or explain: how is education

characterized in post-coup Romania? What may partially explain this lack of unity in a

country that was, very recently, centralized under totalitarian rule is that it decentralized

after the coup, but may not have fully democratized; power was redistributed throughout various facets of control away from the Ministry, not into the citizenry, but instead local elite or competing elite.

While this "umbrella law" could have provided cohesiveness to Romania's education system, one interviewee did not believe the law is the main obstacle to successful reform. Interviewee Ana explained that

Romania has all the necessary laws. They're not enforced. And there is this silly pact for education that Băsescu created last summer that said, basically, that they should do all these things, which actually, they are already the law. But it didn't say anything about how they would be implemented. It was just we need to get together and agree that it's important for children to go to school…

The question of whether the law or the government was/is to blame for the challenges in reform depends on perspective. Interviewee Ana agreed with my characterization that

it depends on who you talk to… you talk to enough people [and find] there are enough overlapping themes, and implementation of law and of policy is the [main] issue. There are some who seem to know this right off the bat. Others talk around it. And there are some who dismiss the laws and policies altogether and believe it's just a matter of this almost old way of thinking of just learn what you need to learn.

Therefore, law and policy in a democracy provide a critically important framework within which the citizenry and government operate. While the interviewees provided various perspectives on whether the elite or the laws were the thrust of reform, it is clear that because the elite made the laws, the framework is beneficial to those who wield

power. In addition, the lack of transparency, frequency of law passage and "see-saw" politics that occur provide additional challenges for the reform process. All of these forces distract from the activity of educating the students and, while not wholly unique to Romania, the effects are particularly pronounced in such a nascent democracy.

Elite

The role of the elite is a crucial component of Romania's transition toward democracy. After exploring democratization, decentralization, democratic education, policy and law, it is important to explore the role of the elite and their impact on these processes. Moreover, because Romania lacked an alternative to those who held power during the totalitarian regime, an elite who were not trained or educated in a way that would directly prepare them for leadership in a nascent democracy, they play a pivital role in impacting Romania's education system. Overall, interviwee responses provided an interesting combination of points to consider, with a wide range of perspectives.

One of the main elite to consider is Ion Iliescu, as Romania's first president who would later be reelected, and former elite in the totalitarian regime. His first term, which really encompassed 1990 and 1991 until the constitution was created, as he was the default leader of the *Frontul Salvării Naţionale*, or National Salvation Front, a group of communist insiders who did not come from the very top of Ceauşescu's regime, but held positions of importance. His term ended in 1996, but he was later reelected in 2000. Interviewee Petre commented on the difference between what we will call his first term [1990-1996] and his second term [2000-2004]:

I think he was less involved in internal politics and more involved in external

politics in 2000. I think. I think that he was, first of all, he liked more the

diplomatic thing. It was a personal thing, I think, but also, it's because of the

Constitution, because the Constitution had been changed and the president now

has less power in the internal political system. And this is one of the causes of our

current president, Băsescu, who is trying to gain more power internally, and he

cannot do that without changing the Constitution. And so there is this big

discussion about changing the Constitution or not, which is not really good

because we need to focus on other things, but again, we're having elections this

year.

Therefore, it was the growing role of the prime minister, who appoints the Minister of

Education, that impacted Iliescu's role and may have helped shape his second term as

president. Interviewee Petre continued:

from this point of view, I think that Iliescu's foreign policy approach to his

presidency between 2002 and 2004 also had very strong contributions to

Romania's somehow development because our external relations greatly

improved during that time. We became better known in, let's say, the United

Nations, for example…And we had a larger part to play there and we had very

good ambassadors there, from a diplomatic point of view. And also, in

Washington, we had the current president, was also an ambassador to Washington

in his previous career. And we had good foreign ministers at that time.

While Iliescu has alleged ties to the KGB and perhaps with their backing organized the

miner's strike that violently quelled any chance of a Revolution and followed a

Perestroika-style reform process during most of his first term, he did change his role during his second term in a way that this interviewee deemed positive. This shift from an internally focused and anti-pluralistic leader to one who looked outward during a second term speaks to the fact that Romania's transition was not simply two-dimensional along a curve. With elite such as Iliescu, of which there are many others to consider, influencing Romania's transition, it is clear that democratic transition is not formulaic or rigid.

Other presidents were not as influential as Iliescu, and it was the ministers who are of particular interest. Andrei Marga is considered one of the main ministers of interest during the transition as he and his administration pushed for many substantive reforms, following a time of stability without significant impact on schooling—a byproduct of perestroika. He is criticized for pushing too aggressivly for law and policy change, as Interviewee Simona explained:

> we had a minister, who was for three years, Minister Marga, who is probably the
> most outstanding personality that led Romanian education after '90. So he was
> this kind of revolutionary guy, who liked very like this new theme, and he pushed
> us very much to go even quicker than we felt at that time that we should go.

Marga's style ran counter to that of Iliescu's ministers five preceding ministers who held office from 1989 to 1997 but, managed to only pass the Accreditation Law of 1993 and the Education Law of 1995. However, some recognize that it was his policy that actually began the movement toward implementation of law via policy. Aside from Marga, the ministers are seen as temporary positions whowere often replaced when prime ministers began new terms. When asked why there have been so many ministers since 1989, Interviewee Petre explained that it is due to

the same reason there have been a lot of government since '89, the position is a

political one, first of all, and if the government changes, then the minister

changes. I don't think it's related to the field. I think it's just a general political,

natural political Romanian way of changing governments and ministers.

Most other interviewees when questioned about the frequent changing of education

ministers did not seem concerned or did not see why this was problematic, as if the

minister was inconsequential. One interviewee mentioned that the changing ministries

only accounted for about 10-15 percent of the entire Ministry, despite the real or

symbolic changes that occurred. Part of the reason for the politicized nature of this

position is that, according to Interviewee Petre,

all the ministers of education after '89 were people from inside the system ,

somehow. They had some relationship to the educational system. Most of the

ministers came from higher education institutions where they had positions, not

only academic positions, but also managerial positions.

Even our current minister of education, she's on her second mandate. She used to

be the Director of the Polytechnic University in Bucharest.

Therefore, most of the ministers have a research or academic background, as opposed to a

managerial background. Interviewee Petre pointed to one example of a minister who did

not have a connection to education:

the only minister who had no connection from this point of view, I think, to the

educational field was Adomniței, who had no connections to – he did not come

from inside the system. He was named politically, let's say, to be nice. But all the

other ministers, even the one who succeeded Adomnițeiand was ministers for two

months, I think, before the elections, Anton Anton, even he came from research. He was the head of the National Agency for Research or something like that. He had connections to education. And also, I think that the other way I would describe all the ministers we had in education from 1989 is that they were very bad managers.

With the exception of Adomniţei, one would imagine that the experience that the ministers had prior to their post in the Ministry would prepare them well for the assignment. However, as stated, they were "bad managers" and,

even though they came from within the system and they pretty much knew the problems and the way the system works and what is wrong with it, and maybe they had a good idea how to fix it, they never really managed to implement their ideas in a good way or at all. So I'm not sure if it is a good thing or a bad thing if you change a lot of ministers or a lot of governments. I'm sure from the theoretical point of view of the political science theory, it is not a very good sign. It's not a sign of stability, especially because in Romania, you have this – we still have this thing that every new administration comes with new people at every level.

The loophole that the government used to replace staff or the minister is that they have the right to change the name of the Ministry of Education, which changes about every two years, on average. For example, a recent name for the Ministry was: "Ministry for Edcation, Research and Innovation," but a prime minister could change one word, omit two, and come up with a slight variation in name to put in power those who will be friendly to his or her ideology, contributing to significant inconsitency if not instability.

While Great Britain is known for a similar tactic, the Romanian government pursues this legal loophole more voraciously. Finally, Interviewee Petre closed with two major points on this topic that pertain to how seemingly unimportant this change actually is, and where it came from:

> I don't see this as corruption and I think it's the same everywhere because finally, there are some other factors beyond the official ones that influence such projects. The problem, I think, in this case, is not corruption, it's access to information, and this has to do with the mentality more than the regulations because Romanian institutions and Romanian employees have this thing that they have learned that you have to keep things a secret. It doesn't really matter what it is, it's that it's better that not many people know.

> It's from the communist time, I'd say. It's to keep things a secret because you never know what can happen if you make them public. It doesn't really matter if you have any responsibility or not...It's better for things to be a secret and only for a select trusted circle of people to know about them…

This observation brings forward the question about the extent two which Romania has democratized, with so much carryover from the previous regime and the manner in which allegedly democratic practices are implemented toward the end of maintaining status quo, but with the conflicting publicity of constant reform change.

The elite maintained control in ways other than exploiting legal loopholes and worldwide trends that supported their agenda—chiefly, by controlling information. The Ministry of Education and their data for reporting are good examples of this phenomenon. As previously discussed, data were skewed and reported incorrectly during

237

the totalitarian regime to showcase an alleged Romanian comparability to Western

countries, when based on interviewee observation, it is known that special needs children

were excluded and allegedly not taught, Roma were excluded, and the overall stats were

skewed. This veil of secrecy and manipulation continued into post-coup Romania as

Interviewee Dan explained:

> the Ministry lacks an institution focused on educational statistics – but we have an
>
> INS – a statistic institute with the department, focused on providing data on
>
> education. Of course, they are not specialists in education, but they gather a lot of
>
> information on education and they publish statistical briefs for every level of
>
> education since 1993, I think, or '94. This is good, at least as a starting point, but
>
> from this, you need a lot of specialists to analyze this and complete this data with
>
> other kind of – other types of statistical analysis. This is actually locked until, let's
>
> say, 2003-2004 because somehow, they were mixed.

The controlling of data by a centralized information bureau seems strikingly similar to a

centralized bureau under a communist regime, especially since the data archives were not

opened until 2003 or 2004. With such secrecy, it is challenging to instill trust in the

statistics that are reported and, therefore, challenging to provide or monitor educational

solutions. This level of control by the the elite undermines efforts that could be put in

place to improve the quality of education in Romania.

This top-down control style of management is not new to Romania, and is

certainly a byproduct of the fascist and later communist/totalitarin regime. As

Interviewee Simona discussed, the reforms that the elite instituted were a version of what

they witnessed in the West, but skewed to be interpreted into the Romanian context:

this was very much a top down, a reform done by elite that is interesting for you. Done by some people that studied somewhere, and you can imagine that coming back after many experiences in the United States, Canada, seeing totally different educational systems, we created something Romanian, but having the spirit of those things. We never copied anything, so taking for instance, so this is not the type of influence I'm talking about, we digested very, very well things. And for instance, the first national curricula that was published in '97, is a result of many years of putting things together, comparing Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States, the national standards of the United States.

This perspective is common in Romania: the idea that Romania is unique and does not copy from other countries, but instead interprets or "digests" ideas so that they can fit into the Romanian context. Ironically, one could argue that it is this very process of "digesting" that takes an otherwise strong or effective law, policy, or practice and damages it to a point where it no longer retains the key elements that made it successful. Worse, the Romanian population could possibly misinterpret the version of whatever system, policy, or law from which it was borrowed and actually think it is an authentic replica of the original. Therefore, the elite can be considered the filter through which external culture and knowledge pass, at least as they relates to the systems, laws, and policies that are created, as well as the values that are pushed forward or maintained.

Interestingly, the elite were relatively well-informed about international theory and practice, both historically and in the present time. As Interviewee Simona explained, the challenge is more complicated:

I wouldn't say that pushing hard was a mistake, but I'm simply trying to reflect

on what happened at that time with elite that had very good theoretical

educational experience, a lot of reading, a lot of international experiences. But

people at that time, didn't have concrete experience of a reform process, a social

process or doing, applying public policies, so these people did not have – but

then, the question is who else did have at that time, nobody. So the country didn't

have any other, and that happened in education.

Therefore, it was the lack of practical experience that was one of the main drawbacks of

an elite-driven reform, which supports the idea of an alternative elite as the one main

obstacle for any transitional country. To this point, Interviewee Simona provided a salient

example:

So for instance, when in '93, the World Bank came to Romania to start their first

project, the World Bank tried to find out people in the Ministry that could work

with them, and that could understand new ideas, new concepts, new vision and so

on. And in the Ministry building, they didn't find anybody because the Ministry

inherited somehow the bureaucrats from the older times. Then they asked – one

day they asked somebody that looked, "Do you have in Bucharest some kind of, I

don't know, research group, institute, some kind of" – they didn't say younger

people because not the age was that important. But they simply were looking

around for people that at least would know something on processes that happen

all over the world. It happened in '93, '94 because the Ministry people didn't

seem to have any understanding of these new things.

The elite were not ready for the transition or prepared in terms of education policy, law, or systemic change, and they were unable to fully maximize the benefits that were offered in terms of knowledge and services from the World Bank—a case where exogenous forces could have provided a positive push for reform.

What brought forward an additional challenege was the indocrincation that occurred under totalitarinaism that seemingly impacted even the elite. For example, Interviewee Simona explained the reasoning for why they did not rush to substantively change the education system post-coup:

> what they said all the time was that, "Look, Romanian education is very good, and we have a meter on this." They say, "Romanian education is very good because all Romanian guys that leave for United States are much more better than United States kids. They know everything," which is true. They cannot do anything, but they know lots of things, and that means for Romanians that our kids are the best, which is profoundly wrong. They know that when they go to United States, everybody said, "Oh, my goodness, did you know everything? Do you know Gerte, you know, Shelley, you know Shakespeare, you know music, you know art, you know everything because you come from a country where this was the vision to give students," and still this is the vision, "to give students everything if possible, all knowledge, knowledge, knowledge."

This theme of the Romanian student having a strong grasp of knowledge but not competency or lacking a pragmatic ability to apply the knowledge underlines both the societal and elite perspetive on Romanian education, which is the situation in which the World Bank found themselves in 1993, as Interviewee Simona extrapolated:

And then, the World Bank came, and then we started building up together the

World Bank project that was very successful. And that actually gathered all these,

let's say, elitist forces that pushed very much the top-down reform.

The elite, therefore, limited the impact of the World Bank, which may have provided

resources to create links between knowledge and competency and between democratic

theory and democratic practice.

The role of the elite is not static, however, and has changed during this case study.

When asked about the changing role of elite, Interviewee Simona provided two main

points. One, it has changed and two, how elite are characterized:

I wouldn't say diminished, no, because it's – look, all the times in Romania, even

in communist times, I would say that the role of elite was important

because…Education is not that much social – it's not that much seen in Romania

as a social service, as it is seen as a cultural fact. So if you go to western

countries, so everybody thinks that education is social service. If you come to

Romania, even very simple Romanians, probably they wouldn't know the

concepts and things.

Regarding how elite are characterized, Interviewee Simona continued:

Sometimes the country representatives are not experts, they are bureaucrats, and

so then, somehow what will happen in the future, is that instead of

professionalism in certain domains, you would go for observing rules and

regulations that are developed by bureaucrats. Because there's one story, if I send

a very good educationalist for developing, let's say, key competencies for school

directors, it's another story if I send a public servant from the Ministry, who just

knows the very bureaucratic part of that stuff. And so then, it's again, when you

develop things in European Union, do we talk on the public servant elites or do

we talk on the educational elites or who are the representatives, so this is my big

question with the Union.

Therefore, many of the elite in the Ministry and government in general were bureaucrats

and not necessarily specialists in a given field, unlike the United States, where many

involved in government have studied political science, international relations, or other

related fields—I will refer to these bureaucrats as theoretical specialists. Moreover, while

the majority of education ministers in Romania had experience with education, few had

the type of experience to manage the reform—a second type of elite who could rise to the

position but not successfully implement policy or law. These two types of elite, the

theoretical specialist and the bureaucrat, held and to a degree still hold a majority of the

key positions necessary to usher forth transition reform. As Interviewee Daniela

explained,

    after the transition – really, the power that succeeded the Communist power was

    not very different from the precursors, precursor regime. So the last thing they

    wanted was to actually change the status quo and to open up the education system

    because they realized that they would be opening up a Pandora's Box of

    contestation and of – okay – so it's only later on when Romania sort of woke up

    and the leadership woke up to the need for international cooperation.

Whether Interviewee Daniela is correct about reasons for the alarmingly fast reform or

very slow implementation, both of which contributed to maintaining the status quo, it is

clear that those leading Romania's transition had a profound impact on education policy and law, and borrowed from outside nations lens that skewed the realities.

There are many examples of how elite have impacted education, and a few will be discussed. One interviewee spoke about the role of the elite in a scandal that recently surfaced, its origin and impact. Interviewee Auralia explained:

when education was inflamed because of a very stupid decision taken by the parliament to raise the salaries of the staff by 50 percent. The decision was something like in the Wild West. It was not based on any economic calculations, but unfortunately, it has been taken among others in the parliament, and up to the final vote, nobody realized the gravity of the decision.

To reference a previous point, public input can be omitted from the policy-making process by intentionally not advertising forthcoming bills or policy agenda until it is practically too late for input. With such tactics, bills like increasing pay by 50 percent without informing even the entire parliament, let alone the citizenry, speaks to the extent to which secrecy and mistrust continues.

A second example of how education is impacted by elite decision-making is well-explained by Interviewee Raluca, who responded to the question about whether there was a need for a longer-term vision for refom as follows:

[elites] never, ever analyze – or they never go through a decision-making process the way that they are teaching in their universities to be done…Why? And they never accept – for example, the Laborers [a political party], they lost the power. They have plenty of time now [to be retrospective after losing their political positions]. If you go and speak with them [and ask if they are] analyzing your

activity in the government, just to know who did what in case [their party is

elected again], [they respond:] What for? And they are [not malevolent] people.

This interviewee is saying that the elite are not going through a reflexive process to

determine the efficacy of policy and law, and the extent to which their impact was

benefitical or not for their next term. While a challenge, Interviewee Raluca provided a

possible solution:

> I think that better stability could be achieved if having long-term goals. If you
>
> have, for example, a 20-year vision, and you have a set of principles that are
>
> stable and negotiated, then you could think that, okay, why should I have the
>
> same ideology? So I will never defend the idea of having the same ideology or
>
> the same political party for 30 years. So no, let the rules of democracy to play.

The interivewee is arguing that while a longer strategy is good, having the exact same

ideology is not a good idea. Therefore, a long-term strategy with the input of many elite

and the citizenry together could create a more robust, and more easily implementable

policies.

A third example of the elite impacting education is the inability of the elite to alter

the core of Romania's education system. Because the system did not change dramatically

from the totalitarian period with the exception of the removal of indoctrination, one could

presume that either the elite were unwilling to institute significant reform that changed

the core of the education system or they were incapable. To complicate matters, without

an alternative elite who would either have new ideas, new abilities or at least a new

perspective outside of a career within the totalitarian regime, the entrenched elite, the

education system remained in the management of former leaders within the totalitarian

regime. Worth noting, however, is that not every elite was complicit in the previous

regime, as many desired to simply fulfill a career, but the fact remains that the education

system in post-coup Romania was expected to change without a change in education

leadership. Therefore, the education system, as one that is impacted by many of the same

elite that held positions during the totalitarian regime, has isomorphic properties on its

own citizenry by replicating similar-minded people. There have been changes, however,

and there has been growth in the NGO arena—unrelated to private higher education—to

address this concern. One such nongovernmental insitute, according to Interviewee

Mona, was looking to the future:

> maybe [this institute] can't influence now, but maybe in the future. [It could be a]
>
> breeding ground to train elites and let staff create projects and submit to foreign
>
> institutes…

Whether through institutes or slowly modifying the education system, it is clear that the

Romanian elite represent one of the single most important factors that impacted education

in terms of the pace of reform, types of reform, depth of reform, policy implementation

and amount of citizen input.

Teachers and Teacher Education

To this point, much of this study has focused on factors influencing education

during Romania's transition such as the impact of colonialism, the influence of

globalization and the limitations of the elite. Teaching and teacher education were

certainly not immune to these factors. As one of the major areas of potential modification

for future democratic growth, teacher education is one of the most striking untapped

resources for improving reform implementation. Teachers, therefore, have potentially changed in the same way the elite have—as individuals, and not systematically. Moreover, there is not an incentive to change, whether fiscal or through the collective "buy-in" of changing a generation, one student at a time. Interviewee Petre explained one of the factors with which teachers must contend:

> For example, you don't have any data on children going from one grade to the other, but you don't know if they – because what happens even now, if you make a student repeat one year because of bad results in a certain subject, it is considered the teacher's fault for not being able to motivate and stimulate that child to learn, and so the teacher gets a bad mark for that, which causes the fact that most teachers prefer to pass students, just not to look bad in the eyes of their colleagues, in the eyes of the inspector for education, in the eyes of the Ministry and so on.

What is missed, in this example, is the potential for the teacher as an individual activist or minimally, contributor, to the transition. Because the state is not providing an incentive, and the threat of "working in a factory" no longer looms over children's heads, it is critical that the teacher be a major motivator and agent of cultural and political change.

A limiting factor, besides the "passing" grading mentality discussed by Interviewee Petre, is teacher preparation. As Interviewee Petre explained,

> I think that civic education became a part of school curriculum pretty early [in the transition]. The only problem is that we didn't have teachers for that because you didn't have qualified people for civic [education] – what happened was that

mostly, teachers of this so-called social sciences…they became also teachers for civic education.

These teachers were trained under the totalitarian regime, like all teachers in post-coup Romania, and none of them were required to take any new coursework or professional development. Without proper or any training, teachers were expected to "flip a switch" and suddenly teach democratic education. As the reform gained momentum, however, there were some changes in professional development, as Interviewee Petre explained:

I'm sure this has changed. Now the situation, I think it's completely different because you had a lot of training courses, you had a lot of programs supporting Romania on this field. So now, I'm sure that this has changed. Going back then, yes, I think so, but that's why at the beginning, I think it was more concentrated on the theoretical level because it was easier even for the teacher to learn about the state.

While there were some changes in professional development, teacher training itself must be explored because it is very different from teacher training in many western European countries or the United States. As Interviewee Dan said,

it's a bit more complicated because here, in Romania, if you want to become a teacher, you go to whatever university you like, and it just take an additional course on pedagogics…those who graduate and have also this course taken for three years now, but it was four years before, they are allowed to teach in –

Interviewer: Just one class?

Interviewee: Yeah – we are allowed to teach in a particular subject. For instance, when I graduated philosophy, I did this just as an insurance – took this course, and I was allowed to enter into the system.

Therefore, in Romania, to become a teacher, the only academic requirement is one course on pedagogy in addition to a university degree; there are various other electives that one can take; only the pedagogy course is required. Also, a student can take a practicum, but it is voluntary and more of a "job shadow" type program than a full semester of being the main teacher as is customary in a Western-style "student teaching" period. Interviewee Dan delineated other requirements:

Interviewer 2: Do you have to take a test or anything?

Interviewee: Yes, at the beginning. When you express your intention to the authority at the county level, and then they provide you with a list of available places in that particular year, in your subject. Of course, most of them are far away from the city center, but okay, they can begin. Then…you pass a test, and if you get a minimum [score], you are allowed to teach there for three years and to prepare for a bigger test that is called definitive teaching – to be officially recognized as a teacher in the system.

This requirement of a test after three years in some ways mitigates the lack of robust instruction on teacher education during one's undergraduate degree, but for those three years, students are learning from a teacher who may also have had only one course on teacher education.

After passing the definitive teacher test, there are other avenues for professional development. Interviewee Dan identified two major types of professional development:

one is the current one that offers you…updates of the needed competencies, and

this is provided mainly by the government, and another that is more put on your

shoulders – on your initiative – to go to a sort of professional degrees – first the

second degree and then the first degree – where after a number of years of

experience, you can pass on exams with some university teachers, and then you

get sort of higher recognition of your skills as a teacher, and you get a better

salary and so on.

The professional development that is akin to continuing education credits (CEU) in the

United States in that it theoretically allows for teachers to remain current and provide

relevant instruction methodologies. The other type of professional development are two

additional tests that teachers take based on additional experience and mentoring with

university professors, but without additional formal coursework or the conferring of an

advanced degree. These two types of professional development apply to both primary and

gymnasium [high school] teachers, with one major difference, according to Interviewee

Dan:

In the primary schools, you have also the…access or regulation change because

before, it was possible only to have a pedagogical high school [no university

study]…more recently, it was said that there is not such a big difference between

a primary teacher and a secondary – lower secondary, for instance, teacher. So to

have such a big difference in initial requirements – so now, they are also supposed

to have…higher education to become… [a teacher].

Therefore, during totalitarianism, primary school teachers were only educated through

high school in Romania, and were not required to pursue university studies. Currently, all

teachers of any grade level are supposed to acquire at least an undergraduate degree in any subject.

This shift is a significant change in requirements for primary education, but it is not system-wide. A gap exists between the urban and rural areas. To attempt to fill this teacher preparation gap, there is a distance education program, but one that does not involve any technology and bears no resemblance to the type of distance education in Western Europe or the U.S. Interviewee Dan provided some context for this distance education program:

> People started including in this rural program – started to do some sort of distance education courses, only to get a diploma to become a qualified teacher. Because if you, for instance, teach – you are graduated philosophy, but you are needed as music education or – I don't know – French language teacher, you can, of course, teach, but you will be considered unqualified, and of course, the salary is very low and you don't have a lot of incentives…
>
> It is distance more a traditional, when they send you the materials – could be on a CD, but you don't have a platform and so on. You just receive – it's a sort of blended, let's say, because they are required to come quite often to [monitor].

To fill a void in the teacher population in terms of the new and higher standards of instruction, this distance education program was established. Being primarily rural, this program underlined and may have even exacerbated existing differences in the quality of education in urban versus rural areas. Moreover, technology could not be used to keep this program up-to-date because, as Interviewee Dan continued,

there are two problems. First…unqualified teachers lack the basic competencies

in using computers, and secondly, there was a huge challenge in terms of

infrastructure because only recently, they started to receive an Internet connection

or a more upgraded PC before – when they started the program…the rural

education program, the infrastructure was really, really poor. They said it will be

not an equal access because some of them will be [unable to use it]. So this is why

they printed everything, and they – sometimes they organize some meetings in the

region, so they – there was not supposed to travel a lot, so they try to find a

compromise between this.

Distance learning in Romania carries a stigma similar to that in the U.S., where it is often

considered subpar to traditional, face-to-face instruction. Because of this, and because of

technological constraints, its potential for truly keeping rural teachers up-to-date is, at

present, limited.

One of the reasons that teacher training was not put at the forefront of the reform

process was the traditionally limited teacher training in Romania: one course on

pedagogics. Therefore, other areas were deemed more important, such as curriculum and

law. In fact, as Interviewee Mihai explained,

teacher training was the last component, which starts. So it was gap between the

moment when the new curriculum was put in place, and the teachers' were trained

to put in place this curriculum.

This gap between the implementation of a new curriculum and the ability for teachers to

provide current pedagogical practices may have contributed to the poorly implemented

reform process and competency acquisition of all students, as well as the lack of

motivation to learn subjects such as civic education. There is symbolic value in teacher training being a last component of reform, almost disincentivizing teachers from desiring to change their methodology, as explained by Interviewee Mihai:

I would have liked to have…done differently was to, somehow, teach people how to teach, to give incentives to people to implement things, and somehow, make them understand the use of this debate, discussion, and implementation process in order for things – no matter if a law is good or bad or a policy is good or bad, at least we need to implement it and wait for the results and have more patience to see if it works or not.

Therefore, without an incentive to change and without the teacher training to execute pedagogic change, one may expect many of the same practices and outcomes to occur in terms of what students know and expect—a serious challenge in a country with a new form of government and new economy.

The idea of "looking back" at the reform process did not really begin until 2000, at which point some studies commenced to determine how student learning was being impacted during this reform as it relates to teacher training. These studies placed a focus, according to Interviewee Mihai, on "the quality of the education and training provision in Romania, and also the outcomes of the education." One of the main studies, aside from the emergence of internal domestic studies, was through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Interviewee Mihai explained that a central UNICEF focus was on gender education, an entirely new concept in Romanian education:

[Gender education] was a subject that was only briefly touched before, and we did a big survey on written and taught curriculum, so we elaborated – also, some

recommendations. Then, we elaborated some guides – specific guides for

different types of teachers, explaining how they can follow the gender dimension

in their classroom, and how they can improve the partnership between boys and

girls and fight against different stereotypes and so on.

To implement new practices to support teachers in becoming aware of and learning how

to avoid gender stereotyping, Interviewee Mihai said that technology was used

in a very innovative approach, we proposed an online training course for

inspectors because they coordinate, more or less, the work of a lot of teachers, and

we have very good success. We used a Moodle platform we adapted a bit to the

specific of this program, and we had almost 350 school inspectors, which is more

or less eight – nine per county. With their help, we promoted a lot of our ideas at

school level.

It is worth noting, however, that as previously mentioned, due to technological gaps that

exist in Romania's school infrastructure, this platform would not have been easily

accessible from the rural communities—some of the areas that most desperately needed

gender education training.

Another study that came out of the UNICEF support was on school violence.

With the diminished role of the state as a mechanism for social order, violence was either

on the rise during this study or, at least, more documented due to a freer press.

Interviewee Mihai provided a background on this study:

Now, we are planning a big national training program – is on school violence,

together, again, with UNICEF because they were very interested – especially after

the media published a lot of cases about school violence between students,

between teachers and students, and so on.

The results of this study on school violence and gender education indicated that, finally,

teacher education or teacher training needed an overhaul. Interviewee Mihai explained

that in-service training is not enough:

> From a broader perspective on sort of in-service training for teachers –
> opportunities, challenges, impact of the new system because in 2004-2005, we
> moved to the credit system of teachers, with teachers being forced to have at least
> 90 credits in five years, and provoking a lot of discussion and issues. Another was
> to evaluate the policy. It was very important in 2003-2004 on extension of the
> duration of the compulsory education from eight to ten years. That provoked a
> huge debate and a lot of challenges for the system because suddenly, you need to
> ensure two more – curriculum and resources for two more years.

The addition of two additional years of compulsory education, which had been lowered in

the beginning years of post-coup Romania to eight, provided an additional reason to truly

investigate and make recommendations for teacher training. However, this interest

developed a full fifteen years after the coup, and will take many more years to be

implemented, presuming it is wholly implemented, and coordinated with the curriculum.

Even with additional teacher training, such training is still so theoretical that its

application may be lost on many new teachers, or many older teachers who are

accustomed to a different way of instructing.

Finally, not all aspects of teachers or teacher education in post-coup Romania were negative. Interviewee Victor explained that teachers had, overall, a different disposition than during the totalitarian era:

> Teachers [in post-coup Romania] were – we could feel that they were calmer and they were happier in a way. They could better relate to us. We had new subjects. We escaped from the subjects we didn't like, like political economy, defending the country, military… [in addition] teachers could – also limited, depending on their availability to introduce new topics, could take care of pupils' interests and introduce a topic that is needed or that the pupils are interested in, even if it's not in the analytical syllabus.

This change in perspective can be harnessed and utilized for positive reform changes and for motivating students. To support a teacher toward this end, it may be, ironically, good to look back at how teachers were treated during totalitarianism, as outlined by Interviewee Victor:

> Teachers were very much models of behavior. They were very respected by the community. To be a teacher, it was something for me…This is not the case now. And in general, to have higher education – if you had a higher education diploma, you were very much appreciated by the community. Now, when you can buy a diploma any time, it is not valuable to study.

For Romania to harness the way in which teachers were respected could take advantage of the newfound disposition of teachers and the potential newly positive relationship with students. As private higher education quality increases, the idea of "buy[ing] a diploma anytime" can be resolved, further increasing the respect of the teacher. In addition, the

belief that the "authority of being a teacher disappeared" must be addressed to further instill a sense of teacher respect.

Finally, a cultural shift must occur to better prepare teachers for democratic education and for the instruction of core competencies. As Interviewee Mona explained, "teachers are not ready for key competencies." In addition, Interviewee Daniela discussed the need for a shift in the way teachers approach the teacher-pupil relationship, which will in turn support democratic education:

> This teacher/pupil or teacher/student relationship... it was meant to preserve and to reproduce a paternalistic order in which the teacher had all the answers. The student had none, and had no right to question, right? Pupils weren't expected to challenge professors. It wasn't the common exploration of knowledge...In my opinion, what is interesting to witness is the difficulty of the transition from a model based on counting mistakes, right? In evaluating, by diminishing the grade according to the number of mistakes.

To shift the type of relationship teachers have with the student is to reevaluate the idea of social reproduction, to address decades of momentum and tradition and to uncover the core challenges in teacher education. There are some positive changes that have occurred, but they are small in comparison to the many lurking challenges that remain since teacher education was the last component of education reform, and due to the fact that those orchestrating the reform were, themselves, schooled in the previous system of education. With the support of organizations such as UNICEF, it may be possible for Romania to address and resolve the challenges that must be faced to further reform its education system for the preparation of a democratic citizenry.

Curriculum

As with policy, Romania's curriculum, a backbone of its education system, endured many changes. These changes differed based on the stage of the reform, whether during the 1990's or during the 2000's. The challenge, however, is the exploration into the extent to which democratic education, which could be a considered a balanced liberal arts education with both democratic courses as well as democratic tactics spread throughout many subjects, e.g., team work, lesson selection, etc., was implemented. As previously described, between the years 1990 and 2000-2002—the first period of reform—the focus was largely on macro-level education reforms in an elite-driven manner without an apparatus for implementation or quality control. The second period of reform, from 2001 through the end of the case study time period, 2007, was more focused on implementation, quality and urban versus rural parity, albeit still top-down. While at first glance the second period could be considered better in terms of implementation, this period was characterized by the interviewees as reactionary, too. Therefore, both period one and period two were reactionary in nature, thereby potentially undermining their respective potential.

To characterize the first period of time, Interviewee Victor explained that curriculum was a victim of the changes in government:

After the '90s, the changing in the education – not only in education – in legislation and different other institutions or fields of society were very rapid. You couldn't get used to a system because it changed. Changing the government meant a lot of changing in a lot of things. In education, for example, changing the government meant many times changing the curriculum.

The lack of momentum and the overall succession of short-term decisions may have undermined the potential opportunity for demonstrable curriculum reform. This does not mean that the Romanian Ministry should not have been rigid to one ideology or philosophy of curriculum design; the learning process that occurs during curriculum development is valuable. Nevertheless, this "back and forth" impacted teachers and contributed to an overall sense of confusion as further explained by Interviewee Victor:

> I remember…a teacher of physics, [who] said 'I really don't know if electricity is a subject or not for the seventh grade because in one year, we should teach electricity.' And also, they got sick of changes. Let us focus on teaching. Another side effect was that many changes asked teachers to prepare better materials, to prepare critical evaluation assessment of students. This can happen when you have – when you work with a smaller number of pupils, but when you work with 150, for example, you cannot concentrate and give to each pupil a good or very fine, precise, accurate evaluation.

This idea of uncertainty pervaded many of the interviewee comments. Teachers were forced to reckon with a new form of government and supposedly, a new form of education—or at least modified—but the constant changes invariably had an impact on the consistency of what was taught. Fortunately, teachers were at least partially included in the development of the curriculum which, as Interviewee Victor continued:

> to design your own curriculum for subjects, it was a challenge and it was something that increased at least the self perception of teachers that they are not just implementers of curriculum but they can design and contribute with their ideas and they can adapt to the pupil's needs.

You are not obliged to create a new subject. You could use that time to get more

into details in one subject or to – if the class had some learning difficulties, to

solve them. It was in my opinion really good that this curriculum happened

because it was a little bit of revival. You could see teachers enthusiastic about

something really good, I think.

This "opening" of the curriculum design process marked a significant change from the

previous system, where teachers were agents of ideology and indoctrination coupled with

knowledge-disbursement a.k.a. banking style of instruction. While the new approach to

curriculum design does not guarantee a new style of instruction, it is a more democratic

approach. One of the main reasons for this change was due to the World Bank, as

Interviewee Victor recalled:

The World Bank program was a comprehensive one. It provided curriculum,

teacher training. In teacher training, nothing significant happened, but at least they

had a vision about it. They approached textbooks. It was the first time when we

had alternative textbooks. More textbooks for the same subject, for the same

school year. You could choose.

This idea of multiple textbooks was revolutionary for those who had lived under the

totalitarian regime for the past number of decades. Of course, multiple textbooks opened

the door for corruption via bribery as teachers were the ones who selected books and

were subject to bribes from the publishers. However, at a minimum, multiple options

allowed for testing various approaches in a new system. This change marked a time

when, as Interviewee Victor continued,

the textbooks were not perceived as compulsory to follow. Not all the topics

should be approached in the classroom. I remember, for example, in the teaching

of Romanian language, literature and Romanian language, that I had just topics of

what I am supposed to teach students – for example, poetry. What a poem means.

I could choose any poem. It was really a high level of liberty because in other

forms of curriculum, you didn't have poetry. This curriculum tried to focus more

on competencies and less on content. This was a major change in terms of

didactics.

The freedom to choose even within a textbook marked another aspect of a change that

occurred in post-coup Romania. This freedom was met almost with temporary

uncertainty, as if the idea of freedom was almost overwhelming. In fact, when given this

new opportunity to develop curricula, as Interviewee Simona explained, "the system was

very difficult to digest these things because from curricula, for instance, they just listed

the topics that should be taught in schools." In this example, Interviewee Simona is

referring to the U.S., U.K. and Canada, and how Romania was looking for an almost

prescriptive approach to education within a new democracy, one that could be adopted

after "digesting" or "filtering." Without this approach, the next best step was

implementing to the best of their ability elements of other countries' curricula. As

Interviewee Victor explained, however, when those teachers and elite who participated in

curriculum development undertook this approach, even the word "curriculum" was new:

This is curriculum; everybody said that this is why we should take this word from

English, why we don't use school programs, as it was used in Romania

before. And we said, "Look, this is not English. This is Latin." Curriculum is a

Latin word… [one teacher] had an understanding. Understanding the word

"curriculum" to a Romanian word that means your backside, and she simply

didn't understand.

This comment provides perspective on the challenge of introducing curricula to teachers,

especially in rural and isolated regions, where the concept was brand new.

The idea of curriculum as a new concept, in comparison to the previous idea of

programs, was compounded by the idea that the source for curriculum did not have to

originate from a textbook, only. For example, Interviewee Daniela explained the

following:

I couldn't quite wrap my mind around the fact that we were getting chapters from

books, passages, paragraphs, little pieces of information in a newspaper article. So

I couldn't get it that that was knowledge as well because I was coming from this

mind-set that in order for it to be knowledge, it has to be bound in a textbook and

be handed down to me, right?

Therefore, the challenge of curricular reform was that the textbook would not be the only

"hand of the state" that passed down mandates for what would be taught, but as

previously mentioned, teacher training did not actually train teachers to know what to

select outside of the textbook. Therefore, this first decade of reform can be characterized

as both exciting and confusing for all actors involved.

The second period of time for curriculum design echoed the ideology of teacher

training and policy creation in that it was retrospective in considering how things had

faired during the first ten years as largely macro in focus, and focused on the specific

aspects. For example, Interviewee Raluca explained that among these curricular changes in the second decade,

> there are a lot that are really supporting democracy. Then now, at least in case of technical and vocational education, we've switched, based on competencies. That's why I told you that we don't have any longer subjects but modules. It's not the case for the whole education, but there is a process because it's – well, you could not simply do it by night. But the same difficulty on who's going to teach democracy, it is now with us who's going to teach competencies?

This comment expresses the idea of ownership and responsibility, and how specific pockets of the system were responding to the missed opportunity of curriculum development and that too much freedom of development without a common framework may not be positive for student learning, let alone longitudinal studies to determine efficacy. Moreover, the desire to not experience constant change in curricular reform grew out of this idea, as Interviewee Raluca explained:

> Why should I change again the syllabus for civic education? Why am I not keeping the same program of training for ten years? Why should I change it each year or every four years?
>
> *Interviewer: Does it change?*
>
> Interviewee: In some cases, yes. And right now, for example, we have on the discussions which kind of subjects should remain into the education. Who's going to decide that? It is also the question who is right in that.

In this second period, the challenges of decentralizing the development of curriculum and determining who are the players and actors in this development is a key theme. Because

democratic or civic education was not integrated throughout the curriculum but only segregated as a single course, for example, there were missed opportunities to create a democratic education curriculum. Moreover, due to the deficit of knowledge in developing a democratic education system curricula, coupled with the fact that teacher education was not developed to prepare for a new curricula, the second period can be categorized not simply retrospective but also uncertain.

Access

Following the exploration of curriculum and a new system, it is important to note that the proliferation of new ideas and concepts was not spread equally throughout the country. Most of the education experts resided in urban areas, and when the local administration gained additional authority to decide upon curricular and program changes, the effects were not felt uniformly across the whole nation. Previously, access to education under totalitarian rule was, according to the state, universal and equal (unless one was Roma). While it has been documented in this study that Romania exhibits an ongoing urban focus to the detriment of the rural areas, access has changed during the transition. Because there was no apparatus to enforce new policies, and "policing" of these new policies was limited access became more challenging, particularly among minorities or the poor, who often lived in rural areas. In reference to the "J curve," as freedoms increase, so too does instability, and with instability via decentralization came inequalities and disparities between those who can access or know how to access those aspects of the system that can benefit them.

One of the reasons that access and by association, inequality, pervaded Romania was due to Ceauşescu's state-mandated urbanization movement, which depopulated the rural areas. With a lower proportion of citizens in the rural areas, resource distribution from the Ministry favored the highly populated urban areas—which lasted throughout the transition. One of the major factors that allowed this reality to continue was due to the misperception of education quality in Romania, based on the myth pervaded by the education Olympiad. Interviewee Petre explains that a very small percentage of schools participated in the Olympiads, and those schools

> are traditionally training students for this international contest. I mean, they
> started at school level and they study only one subject, for example, math. But the
> truth is that the other 99 percent of the schools are not doing that great.
>
> *Interviewer: You mean at that point in time or today or both?*
>
> Interviewee: I would say both. I'm not sure about before 1989. We have figures
> that document my words, but they are from the recent times, from 2006, 2007.
> And you can find, also, numbers that can prove some of those facts that date from
> 1990, so after the revolution. Before '89, you didn't have official statistics, let's
> say. You didn't have the certainty that the official statistic was real.

However, the results of the Olympiad, where the few students who competed internationally performed well, were touted by the Ministry as being representative of most Romanian students and the entire Romanian education system. The reality, in fact, was that a small minority of urban-schooled students participated, which let the inequality and inconsistency of education performance nationwide continue to languish

under this misapprehension. The results of this misunderstanding, Interviewee Petre argues, is that

> statistically speaking, in Romania, if you are born in a village, you have more chances to die at birth than to get to university. So people coming from rural areas, if they don't have some kind of – if they cannot get to high school in an urban area to a city, then they have no (chance) – there are no high schools in rural areas.

Moreover, teachers are the ones in charge of truancy, and they are not financially or otherwise incentivized to track down rural students to keep them in school. Coupled with financial challenges for even paying for higher education, rural students have an uphill battle to attend and graduate from rural areas in Romania to this day.

The implications for an unequal access to quality education for the rural Romanian population impact Romania's transition toward democracy. As Interviewee Raluca explains:

> In rural areas, the access to learning and to practicing democracy is far away from what it should be or [in comparison to] the average in Romania. So not comparing with the ideal world but is there. And in this respect, I think, again, that from both sides, NGOs and those in charge with education, I'm referring to technical and vocational education, but I don't think that it's too much difference with primary schools in rural areas, also, with what I'm saying. I think that both partners, they should work together, plus the public administration, they have also to come there and to do something, in this respect.

By linking the learning and practicing of democracy, this interviewee speaks to the linkage that has not wholly been made in Romania between the theoretical and the practical in democratic education, which is exacerbated by schools of lower quality. Moreover, as Interviewee Raluca continues:

> Unfortunately, demographically, we are very bad because it's an aging society, Romania, and we do not have that many youngsters in the rural areas, so it's quite difficult, then, to say that it will be very easy to rebuild the trustfulness, starting from rural areas to urban areas. But it's quite rare and I could not say that there it is the education that did that. No role of education. It was just because they are old enough to remind their good times and to do that, and they are accepting the dialogue and the way they work each other.

Thus, the rural areas have democratization challenges, and as discussed during the section on decentralization, resist assuming responsibility. These broader macro challenges impact rural areas on a micro level in terms of limited access to a quality education. Therefore, as urban areas continue to transition and refine, rural areas will be left behind along with their students, which has implications for the entire system as a whole.

Minority Education

Following on from a discussion about access to quality education in rural areas, one of the major issues facing Romanian education in a democratic society is minority education. Romania is almost ethnically homogenous as a whole, but there are significant populations of ethnic Hungarians, some Germans and many Roma who face many challenges in receiving a high quality education. While the Hungarian and German

population have the cultural backing of their respective countries, and have been more strongly integrated into the Romanian higher education system and culture, the challenges Roma face are comparatively far more significant. To this day, ethnic Romanians rarely describe this ethnic minority as "Roma", instead using the pejorative words "țigani" or "gypsy." One interviewee described the plight facing the Roma as akin to that of African-Americans in the United States of the 1940's, before the civil rights movement had dismantled the racist Jim Crow tradition of second-class citizenship.

The Roma population was at one point nomadic, and therefore had no official relationship with any particular country. However, populations have settled in respective Eastern European countries, adopted local languages and are no longer nomadic. Both the citizens of the country they inhabit and the Roma themselves have resisted integration or assimilation, the combination of which preserved or increased prejudice and inequality. In the case of Romania, Interviewee Ana expressed that over 90% of Roma use the Romanian language as their first written and spoken language, with 85% expressing that they were Romanian Orthodox. In short, the Roma have culturally adopted two major aspects of Romanian culture—language and religion—but have not received adequate representation in government, support via integration policy or engagement via supporting the education of their children by allowing for non-matriculation of first graders and early dropouts.

Some organizations such as UNICEF have stepped in to address the inequalities that the Roma face. Interviewee Dan explained the impetus for UNICEF to work with the Romanian government:

We work a lot with students coming from schools that are located in very poor

areas, associated many times with having gypsy students, and with a lot of social

and economic problems. This is why we carried out several studies with the help

of Ministry and with UNICEF Romania, in the area of access to education of

Roma students in the area of promoting a development model.

Some positive outcomes may have originated from this study, as Interviewee Victor

expressed:

Those gypsy pupils, it was the first year of mandatory school, so those that get

higher marks in the class really became well appreciated. No integration

problems. The other pupils didn't even think about that they are gypsy because

they had the highest marks. When they – in the opposite case [when Roma receive

poor marks], the integration problems were bigger.

This observation indicates that when Roma perform well, they are respected in schools at

least by other students and teachers. However, as Interviewee Ana explains:

Despite all these nice laws, Romania's literacy rate is decreasing and the school

abandonment rate is rising. From 2001 until '07, it tripled, the dropout rate in

primary school, which is one through four. And then middle school was worse.

Let's assume 10 to 12 percent of the population is Roma. And 44 percent of Roma

are under 18. We actually find it's more like 50 percent of the communities. And

22 percent of the Romanian population is under 18, so 23 percent of the

population under 18 is Roma. One out of four Romanian children is Roma. Now,

years spent in school, national average, 11.2, Roma children, 6.8. Those are the

education curves, so you can see how much less education these Roma kids are

getting. It's scary if one out of four kids is in this group. Where are they going to

get their workforce in 2020?

Unlike the United States' efforts to increase enrollment in higher education by beginning

to provide additional support for cultures who historically did not attend higher

education, Romania has not begun to make this connection. While the statistics are

challenging to substantiate due to uncertain census numbers and a gross under

acknowledgement of the Roma population, especially the Roma population in urban

areas, it is clear that for those statistics of students who enter school, the performance of

students is low and dropout rates are extremely high. Interviewee Ana dispels other

myths that permeate the Romanian population about Roma:

> That's another mentioned as a big problem, identity documents. Well, 95 percent
>
> of them have it. We wind up with about, maybe, 1 out of 100 kids we deal with
>
> needs – well, I'll say, I don't even think it's 5 out of 100. Anyway, that's not a
>
> huge problem.

With laws such as the anti-discrimination law supposedly protecting the Roma

population, there are policies in place that prevent students from receiving an equal

opportunity for Roma education, as Interviewee Ana explains:

> There's a program that provides school supplies to poor kids, but the practice is to
>
> wait a month before you give it to them to make sure they're going to stay in
>
> school before you waste the money. And sometimes, they don't even get there for
>
> three months. We know cases like that because we provide schoolbooks for – not
>
> the books. The book is there, but the teacher can require workbooks, and the
>
> workbooks can cost up to, say, 20 Euros.

What are the results of this type of policy? Interviewee Ana has observed that Roma students who do not have materials

> sit in the back of the class and cause trouble. Anything that does go wrong – and everything does go wrong all the time – in order to help these people, you really have to have integrated services or you have to have your network of services because everything goes wrong.

To be fair, however, not all blame falls on the shoulders of the Romanian Ministry of Education at the central or local level—some responsibility falls on the Roma themselves, as Interviewee Ana articulates:

> The Roma movement is partly responsible for that because they want a sense of their own culture and identity, so they identify with wagons and with Roma clothes and just all that kind of stuff, and there are problems within the Roma movement because some of the women want to change the marriage customs and some of the men –
>
> So the schools, teachers don't know how to deal with these kids who come in, who are 8 years old and they don't know all the colors in the rainbow, they don't know how to hold a book, they don't know how to hold a pencil.

This case seems strikingly similar to the achievement gap that exists in the U.S., whereby students from more affluent backgrounds or at least families who value education come to kindergarten with basic literacy and social skills, while other students enter kindergarten without these skills—and this gap lingers throughout every grade of schooling. The achievement gap in the U.S. is far more complicated, however, because

there are a plethora of cultures whereas in the case of Romania, the main issue is with one culture—a more manageable challenge to tackle.

To remedy the challenges Roma face, new leadership is necessary. Just as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. broke barriers so that Rev. Jesse James could lead a way for the subsequent election of President Barack Obama, so too must the Roma enter the leadership of the Romanian government because, after all, Republics are representative democracies. Since the U.S. and Romania both have representative democracies (although Romania's is Parliamentary), the Roma will not receive adequate representation until they are part of the system. Interviewee Ana continues this idea with the following comment:

> The Roma don't even respect their own leadership. It's a big problem. And I see, in part, the difference being that, in the [U.S.] black community, there were also these churches that had black ministers who really pressed for education, really pushed the people to send their kids to school. There was an educated class because of the segregation. You had to train blacks to be doctors and lawyers and stuff because whites wouldn't serve them. [In Romania] they recently announced the first Roma Orthodox priest. It's 2009 and they got the first Roma Orthodox priest and these people are 85 percent Orthodox.

With some precedent that provides a roadmap in countries like the United States, the Romanian Ministry of Education, Romanian people and Roma may wish to consider adopting a similar approach, i.e., substantively ensuring that the Roma enter kindergarten and 1st grade, do not drop out, receive resources and educate their way into leadership.

Higher Education

Just as primary and secondary education experienced many reforms, so too did higher education. More than primary and secondary education, higher education is the only area where exogenous directly impact education,[35] via organizations like the EU and its voluntary Bologna Process or ECTS, or through the desire to compete internationally with reforms based on Western-style institutions. Because of this "outlet" to the outside, higher education was part of a top-down assimilation process whereby reforms to the programs and requirements for admission and graduation impacted K-12 curriculum and pedagogy. In short, reforming higher education impacted the entire education system. This top-down approach to reform, whether wholly intentional or circumstantial, was certain to be flawed by the lack of implementation review apparatuses or assessments of ramifications of these top-down policies.

Findings for interviewees are divided into two main categories: 1) public higher education ; and 2) private higher education. The findings are organized around both real and perceived changes that occurred during the transition, with a focus on specific examples of what happened, accompanied by interviewee's perceptions on why certain changes occurred. While many of the public higher education reforms were driven largely in response to Bologna or ECTS, or perhaps mimetic isomorphism based on Western institutions, private higher education was driven largely by domestic forces.

---

[35] As argued, the EU impact on Romania is isomorphic. The EU directly impacts higher education, but does not have any direct role in K-12 policy. Other forces like colonialism and globalization may impact all levels of education, but indirectly and not through official policy and law via external mandate.

Periods of Higher Education Reform

Public higher education reforms were based primarily on domestic interests. Following the coup, institutions were free to broaden their curriculum and consider new majors that would have been previously forbidden or not relevant for a planned economy. There were three distinct periods of reform that were based on three specific laws or policies. The first period follows the 1991 Romanian Constitution and the passage of Article 32. While my interviewees may not have known that specific article by name, they were all aware of the powerful change that occurred when private universities were allowed to form, the specifics of which will be discussed in a subsequent section on private higher education. The next period is marked by the Law of 1993, whereby universities were granted autonomy to operate free from the Ministry's control. My observations in Romania lead me to believe that autonomy was granted for the democratic reason of decentralization and empowerment of locally-run institutions. Moreover, autonomy may have been granted by the Ministry of Education to shed the responsibility of "figuring out" the transition while the Ministry focused on primary and secondary education. The third period of higher education reform began in 1999 with Bologna, which to this day impacts the reform process, acting as both a change agent and exogenous force of assimilation to EU standards.

Period One: Private Higher Education

Almost concurrent with periods two and three of the public university reforms, private higher education reforms commenced with the creation of the Romanian constitution in 1991 and specifically, Article 32, as discussed in Chapter II. Private higher

education in Romania is still very controversial as a relatively new phenomenon; interviewee feedback, coupled with my literature review, suggested that this controversy stems from the way in which these universities operate as NGO's and their status as "diploma mills." Interviewee Petre provided an interesting perspective on private education pertaining to the lack of historic precedent, using the example of private high schools:

> In the case of private universities, the story is different. In the case of private high schools, you have only a few of them. They're not very known. And usually, they are considered an alternative for students who, somehow, didn't make it in the public sector or for students who have very rich parents who can afford to pay, but usually, people coming from private high schools are not really considered as the best students that you can find. I think this is because education has been a state affair in Romania since forever. You don't have a history of private education in Romania.

When asked whether the perception of private education being of low quality will change, Interviewee Petre responded by saying:

> We can only hope. The experience of private universities, for example, is very interesting from this point of view because in 1993, after 1990, what happened was everybody was – a lot of people tried to do things. One of the things they tried to do was establish private universities, or at least higher education institutions in the form of faculties, let's say, only one subject. And this was a field that was not legislated. You had no legislation for three years. Between 1990

and 1993 [Period 1], you had no legislation regarding higher education and

private higher education.

The lack of legislation and framework for reform may have even been compounded by

the significant increase in the amount of freedom for those with the fiscal ability to found

and manage new institutions. The legal loophole for the management of private higher

education institutions stems from their status as NGOs—another entirely new concept to

Romanians, as Interviewee Petre discusses:

In Romania, private higher education institutions, private universities, are

considered NGOs. From a judicial point of view, they are considered NGOs. This

is important to know because first of all, in the '90s in Romania, NGOs were, and

still are, from some point of view, exempt from certain taxes. For example, in the

'90s, if you bring a car from outside the country, if you buy yourself a car, you

had to pay some taxes to the Romanian state. If you were an NGO, you didn't

have to pay those taxes because we wanted to encourage the NGO field.

While there is international precedent for private higher education institutions to operate

as NGOs, most of the interviewees felt that their status as an NGO undermined the

benefits of an NGO because they saw tax avoidance as a main reason for their

establishment—not mission. Furthermore, it was the way in which funds were dealt with

that proved disconcerting for the interviewees, as Interviewee Petre explains:

They're not for-profit, all of them. And so what happens is that now, this has led

to the following thing. In 2009, the wealthiest, in terms of universities, the

wealthiest are the private ones because they got money from students as

admission fees, in general, and they needed to invest all that money in something.

And they have built empires, let's say, of building which are empty because there

are not enough students to fill then. But they had to build buildings and this is

what they did. They built buildings.

The criticism about constructing buildings is that money could have been reinvested in

the quality of instruction or a myriad other ways in which private higher education

institutions could have improved, but instead, they chose to put the money into

unnecessary infrastructure development.

The history of the NGO predates its application to private higher education. A law

from 1923, which is still applicable in post-coup Romania, was applied following the

creation of Article 32 to legally create private higher education institutions under this

framework. The fact that a law created during the time when Romania was a monarchy

was permitted to not only be used today, but applied differently for private higher

education, is testament to the powerful importance of history. Although unanswered, the

question of what other laws were allowed to be "carried over" and how they were applied

within this new democratic government is a topic that must be explored in future studies.

As it relates to this case study, part of the stigma for the private higher education

precedent is that the law was not created for the expressed purpose of education, which

means a unique interpretation of the law appears, to the Romanians, as manipulative.

Interviewee Auralia discusses the way in which NGOs were created from this historic

legality that was not previously utilized for private universities, despite predating the

democratic form of government:

There was this trick of establishing a university like foundations, using the

foundation law of 1923. They had established, which was valid, nobody knew, but

somebody knew, somebody discovered, and they said, okay, according to this

law, we establish a foundation, which will deliver education. And so we do have

almost additional 40, if not more, private, so-called private universities. The

parliament tried to regulate in a way this situation, and they drew regulations

related to the quality of the education, but the process is very complicated.

One of the outcomes for these NGOS was a lack of regulation, which resulting there

being "a lot of crooks who started to present themselves as directors of the university" as

Interviewee Auralia expressed. Therefore, it was not that private education itself was the

crux of the challenge in garnering respect, it was the individuals themselves who may not

have been respected and represented greed. Moreover, as Interviewee Auralia explained,

for many years the private higher education institutions

were not accredited. They were not part of the higher education system, but

people believe, and the period was not Romanian traditional period. People want

to have access, an easy access to a university degree, so I think that the mass

university education is something, which came also due to some pressure from the

people.

While private higher education universities may have had a stigma, were not accredited

and may not have provided as high a quality education as with public universities, they

represented the massification of higher education and a symbol of breaking down the

existing elitist model that even impacted professor hiring as discussed in a previous

section. Because the public higher education had too many barriers to entry, private

higher education lowered the barrier—but not without the costs previously discussed.

By the time Romania entered the EU, new regulatory frameworks inspired by

Bologna were introduced to mitigate the challenges of private higher education and help integrate these institutions as part of a comprehensive solution to increase the number of graduates in Romania. Has private higher education improved over time? Interviewee Raul believes it has "higher standards":

Interviewer: But not to the standard of public higher education?

Interviewee: Probably not. So it's improving, but still –

With a positive overall trend in private higher education quality, it went from being part of a problem to part of a solution for training the next generation of Romania's workforce. Interviewee Victor was even more optimistic and yet ironic about private higher education, in saying that

> probably in two or four years, there will be no difference in the quality of public and private universities because the quality decreased also in the public universities as well. The private universities didn't offer quality programs from the beginning. I think they were seen as a business, not as a higher education institution. They really – they were very interested to have a great big number of students. No selection for entering the university, which means a lot.

Therefore, while private higher education will continue to increase in quality, being on par with public universities does not carry the same significance as it once did. However, if there is a relatively close gap in quality between private and public higher education, perhaps they can together compete and possibly increase the quality of education to attract talented students, therefore potentially driving up education quality throughout the higher education system.

Period Two: University Autonomy

One of the first challenges during period two pertained to making sense of autonomy and determining how to proceed. As Interviewee Raul explained, higher education

> [has] changed a lot, some things for the better, some things let's say being part of
> the general trends, generally speaking, so not necessarily positively. So first of all,
> of course from the topics point of view, it's much more freedom now than it used
> to be, then, it was restrictions for even the teachers, sometimes they were
> supposed to say certain things, and now there is no such constraint. So we go and
> say whatever we consider is related to our topic, of course, we discussed what is
> to be told, so this is one thing that happened and is different from the previous
> period, meaning before 1990, when it was more restrictive, and this is a sign of
> democracy. The fact that we can teach our classes how we consider that it's
> appropriate for the particular subject, no politicization as it used to be previously.

What complicated the newfound freedom and potentially undermined its beneficial potential was the fact that as with the Ministry of Education, there was not an alternative elite in the higher education community. Moreover, the predominant theme for those who could usher forth reform echoed the primary and secondary teachers—almost all Romanians were educated in the theoretical, not practical.

Complicating this matter of higher education reform was the fact that an urban/rural divide existed, albeit with two main regions of influence: Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. Cluj-Napoca's university, Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, is surrounded and attended by many Romanian-Hungarians and, regardless of this culturally unique factor,

this University tends to cultivate many of the education leaders in Romania. The other center is in Bucharest both with the Universitatea din Bucureşti and Academia De Studii Economice, coupled with the Ministry of Education and other local elite institutions. With these two centers of higher education authority, and due to the Ministry granting university autonomy, reform was not geographically consistent in Romania. One byproduct of inconsistent reform and prestige of certain select universities was the challenge in redistribution of faculty talent, as Interviewee Auralia explains:

> If you are an assistant professor in Timisoara, and you…move to Bucharest, and find a position, which is advertised, it's no use. It's not going to happen unless you go and talk to the people, and say, "I want to come." At the assistant's level, it's no problem. At the professor level, it's a tragedy. It's very complicated. So that's a mentality. The universities, they start opening towards each other. It's very strange. In the last ten years, it was much more easier to make all the paperwork, and to send people abroad than to send them from Bucharest to Timisoara. It's the internal bureaucracy. It's a lack of culture because education means a certain type of culture. Certain type of culture, when I say that I'm referring – for example, I'm saying some of the universities did not care about publications. It's a problem of culture. If you know, as a young researcher, as a young assistant that you are going to be promoted only if you have articles in known journals, in well-known journals or is to go to important conferences, and you'll fight for it. If not, you're not going to do it. Why do it?

The idea of university prestige and hiring based on the university at which one teaches is not entirely unique; However, the extent to which this is executed in Romania coupled

with the idea that after the coup a necessary balance in distribution of university talent

may have been beneficial, compounds the impact.

The challenge regarding the voluntary redistribution of university teachers was

not the only institutional issue with which universities must contend. Bureaucracy,

specifically this Ottoman-type democracy that one interviewee previously discussed (one

designed to devalue the individual), remained in post-coup Romania. One of the impacts

of this carryover pertained to accounting challenges, as Interviewee Auralia discusses:

> The problems are not in agreements, the problems are in daily activities, and how
>
> the accountant will treat you, and come with an invoice from the states or from
>
> France that you will say I don't understand, and I'll state it legally in Romania,
>
> things like that. These are the daily things, which have smothered the relations. So
>
> definitely, exposure today would be cooperation with the other entities saying
>
> universities are not only research entities.

From an outside perspective, the concept of requesting an invoice translation appears to

be practical, but as Interviewee 4 went on to explain that it was not legally necessary or

even pragmatically necessary as many Romanians are well-versed in French; Instead, this

act of requesting a translation is a political game to slow down processes and demonstrate

authority. This type of bureaucracy and operational environment provides a backdrop for

the ways in which universities still contend with the byproducts of Ottoman colonialism

and challenges related to the transition itself.

Another new challenge following the granting of university autonomy in a free-

market economy pertains to funding. The percentage and proportion of students attending

higher education in Romania, according to Interviewee Petre, is lower than other
countries in Europe:

> Our purpose is to get more students into universities, first of all, because we don't
> have a lot of – compared to the population, let's say, the percentage of people
> having access to higher education is very, very low. I don't know the numbers by
> heart, but I can tell you that in 2006, I think, in Romania, in all public and private
> higher education institutions, we had around 600,000 people at a population of 20
> million, let's say, which is very low as a number. If you compare it to any
> European Union – not to say the States, but if you compare it to any European
> Union member country, this is a very low number.

With a relatively low number of students matriculating at higher education institutions,
the next generation of leaders will therefore emerge from a smaller pool of talent.
Compounding this issue is the idea of education finance for universities, as Interviewee
Mihai explains, which is driven by user fees:

> Many students didn't go to universities, and universities had to attract students in
> order to have finance because as you know from yesterday, they are financed
> upon the numbers of the students. And that number was in decline. And because
> of the exam, not many got into higher education, and this is why they…were
> forced to put aside the exams, and also, to attract students from the private
> universities into the state ones.

The exam this interviewee mentions is the University Entrance Examination. The
University Entrance Examination's role has diminished in significance because it proved
to be a barrier to entry for universities who sought to attract larger numbers of students.

In short, universities lowered their admission standards to increase the student body for the sole purpose of bringing in more revenue. The effects of watering down their degrees will be felt in the decades to come, and represent one area that must be addressed to ensure that the university system adequately educates students based on both having enough fiscal resources and being able to academically support students who may not be prepared for university.

Period Three: Bologna

Fortunately, the Bologna Accords in 1999 marked the beginning of a new era in higher education reform for EU member countries and especially for Romania. While Bologna is an exogenous force and one that homogenizes and assimilates—the manifestation of one-size-fits-all—it provided the framework that Romania needed to address its lack of leadership in helping universities reform. While universities have not become entirely autonomous, especially with regard to educational quality, this re-examination of higher education had an impact beyond undergraduate students. In fact, undergraduate study is only one challenge for the university, as Interviewee Petre explained:

> What's even worse, I think, is that inside higher education, you have three levels. You have the bachelor's degree, you have the master's degree, and you have the Ph.D…starting from the second level, the master's and the Ph.D., you have less and less people. And the worst situation we have is in master's degrees because the number of people going for a master's degree is very, very low. I'm not sure about the number, but I know it's very, very low.

And one of the targets of the Bologna Process is to increase the number of people [to] have access and going to master's degrees and Ph.D.s, to the second cycle, I would say. And this is because you want to train your workforce better. This is how it's supposed to be done, to get more competencies, to get better education, as you're saying, for example, to become more professional in a field you need to go to the master's, and of course, the Ph.D., if you're pursuing an academic career. The bachelor's degree, even in Romania now, they're not really considered enough for most jobs.

By focusing on increasing the number of master's and Ph.D. students, universities may need to address the challenge of admitting too many students who would otherwise not be qualified.

To mitigate this challenge, universities may have to either provide a more individually-centric form of instruction to maximize individual learning or slightly decrease enrollment and focus on educating students to be prepared for graduate studies. Additional challenges, as Interviewee Petre continues, pertain to what the Romanian workforce demands:

Depending on universities, of course, but in most fields, it's not enough, and you need to, somehow, get a master's degree. In terms of quality and of what the students learn to do and if they have better abilities or competencies or something like that, and if they learn more things, I think this is debatable. It depends on what point of view you are taking. And it depends from one higher education institution to another. And even inside the same higher education institution, you

have the facilities and they are different, in terms of quality of education. The idea

of checking the quality of education in Romania is, again, new.

The concept of quality control is new to Romania due to the shifting of values resulting

from transitioning toward democracy. Instead of graduating a workforce for a planned

economy, Romania's higher education must now tackle issues related to broadening its

mandate to prepare students to be global leaders and participate in a global economy.

After the Bologna Accords, and a full 16 years after the coup, Romania created

new legislation, according to Interviewee Petre, which "passed in 2006, and only starting

in 2007, we have a national agency who is monitoring, evaluating, assessing quality of

higher education." This national agency is supporting both quality control as well as the

general approach toward implementing the Bologna Accords concept of ECTS, or

European Credit and Transfer Accumulation System and the respective requirements, as

explained by Interviewee Petre:

> For the Bologna Process, for example, we needed to implement the European
>
> Credit Transfer System, the ECTS. This had to be done through a law, which
>
> stated that in order for you to get your bachelor's degree, for example, you need
>
> to get 240 ECTS. But because of university autonomy, they could not – the
>
> Ministry cannot put forward a law saying how this ECTS is awarded, how many
>
> credits do you award a course and on what ground. This is the problem of the
>
> university to establish. And also, the Ministry cannot force universities, for
>
> example, to accept ECTS from other universities.

Based on this interviewee's contribution, the challenges facing public education remain

as byproducts of the transition, i.e., the two periods of reform whereby autonomy without

a roadmap and authority without power caused the higher education system to undergo

significant changes with serious consequences until Bologna provided a start for a real

framework. However, the effects of Bologna and the extent to which it is well-

implemented remains to be seen.

Summary of Chapter Findings

Based on the findings in this chapter, there are several important factors to the

question "What role did education play in Romania's transition from a totalitarian regime

toward democracy?" In short, the role of education in Romania during its transition was

minimal because it was not a change agent in the transition toward democracy.

Education's role was undermined because it was not placed at the top of the national

policy agenda as compared to the legal and economic reforms. The interviewees felt that

there were too many reforms created and implemented without a consistent framework

and with a short-term perspective because education lacked clear leadership and

comprehensive strategy. In addition, the number, frequency and poor construction of

reforms meant these reforms had little effect on the core of Romania's communist

education system. Particularly, these policies were often created for political victories and

often only represented symbolic policy. Because education was not a national priority

and its reform process lacked a cohesive strategy, the role was far smaller than it could

have been.

With some irony, reformation during the transition was not static, and yet in many

ways, status quo was preserved. The focus on urban areas remains, and the valuing of

public higher education and lack of attention paid to private higher education caused a

delay in advancing education quality countrywide. Thus, the system is reforming in a disjointed manner with many conflicts of interest and on an uncertain path—as if it is not one large system but instead, many independent parts transitioning at different paces. Fortunately, there are agents within the education system with the capacity for demonstrable change such as reforming the core of Romanian education, integrating democratic education and increasing the robustness of teacher education if coordination, vision and prioritization are aligned.

CHAPTER VI: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

The source of my interest in exploring the case of Romania and the role of education during its transition toward democracy was the desire to identify and examine those factors that influence the democratic transition. These factors are often relegated to the realm of domestic politics or international relations, as if there is not any overlap with the field of education. To explore these factors with Romania as a case study, I reviewed policies, laws and literature that pertained to Romania, Romanian education and the Romanian political transition, together with a historical perspective. The purpose of this research was to determine if there were unanswered questions that would warrant further original research. The short answer was yes: a gap in the literature existed, as explained in Chapter IV and Chapter V, regarding the minimal research that explored relationships between exogenous forces on transitional education reform as well as a distinctly poor representation of the Romanian perspective in the literature.

The literature on education in Romania has largely focused on broad-scope education issues and the potential forces that shaped or impacted those education issues. While some studies have "drilled down" into specific areas of Romanian education, ranging from the education or treatment of the Roma, post-Soviet studies, or a focus on the coup d'état, only a handful have explored macro themes as exogenous forces impacting education. However, even the few studies that have explored macro themes have limited themselves to exploring challenges and successes within specific subject areas without focusing on education in Romania. Moreover, no study focused on

transition and education, and few paid any attention to education as a component of democracy-building.

Theoretical Reflections

Because my case study explored the concept of transition rather than democratization or simply decentralization, I was able to better understand how a country's population and government change during a specific period of time bounded by events (in this case, the coup in 1989 and entry into the EU on January 1, 2007). Democratization literature tended to focus on a framework of steps or qualities that a country must acquire or possess, respectively, to be *democratizing.* In the case of Romania, and in a tumultuous region such as Eastern Europe, I sought to explore how these countries have survivalist mentalities based on a legacy of colonialism, and how they transition to varying levels of autonomy or independence. Transition to democracy, therefore, became a series of necessary coping mechanisms for countries that wished to remain relevant and viable as autonomous nations. Education amidst transition in Romania, therefore, was a system less able to provide the stability and focused characteristics of nation-building. Moreover, while education in non-transitional countries do experience change and exhibit some degree of fluctuation, it is the extreme degrees of change that impacts education in a transitional democracy, like a compass whose needle cannot settle on a bearing.

To further explore the linkages between transition and education, I researched relevant topics and came across three emerging forces: colonialism, globalization and isomorphism. These three forces, whether as independent or as collective actors, were

tremendously important in shaping the current path of Romania's transition. As I will discuss in subsequent sections, the concepts I utilized in Chapter II help explain these forces and provide various perspectives on how they can, or do, impact a country— especially a country in a vulnerable position such as transition. What is original as it relates to these concepts is that they have never been explored in conjunction with one another, and never in association with one another as a group of three, as interrelated factors that *must* be researched together when evaluating the role and context of education during a political and cultural transition. This combination of all three concepts as a foundation or backdrop to exploring transitional countries is one gap I sought to fill with this research.

Following on from this assumption, a second gap emerged: the perspective of the Romanians who held or now hold key positions that affected education during the transition (and possibly before, too) is generally missing from the literature. Therefore, I focused the foundation of my literature review on the need to better understand: 1) what transpired in education during the transition and; 2) what impacted this course of events to manifest in the manner in which they did. Moreover, the literature necessitated that I understand how past political and educational decisions affect the present, or in this case, the period between 1990 and 2007, even though the transition in Romania is ongoing. With such a seemingly broad mandate, my first assumption was that I should narrow this broad scope it to a finite point such as an age group or subject, e.g., early childhood education or, citizenship education. However, this would perpetuate the study of narrow, subject-specific aspects of transitional education, rather than resolving the dearth of high-

level, macro perspectives for the purpose of understanding education's role and context in a transition.

The literature provided a strong foundation for my original research interviews, as the initial research questions were effective and relevant because they focused on subject matter chosen to be familiar enough that interviewees could delve deeply into subjects and provide concrete examples. Moreover, interviewees' perspectives and voices, two syntactically different concepts, could be acknowledged alongside those of international scholars who have written or discussed Romania's case. Moreover, a deeper and specific discussion could take place, whereby theory and practice could merge into concrete understanding and tangible evidence. With a carefully crafted strategy coupled with refined and artfully selected interview questions, the interviews transpired in such a way that I was able to gather 160 pages of transcribed interview text, from which I developed the findings in Chapter IV and Chapter V. From those findings, it is possible to infer and comment upon possible conclusions and solutions to transition challenges that could have been avoided or mitigated to some degree.

My investigation not only filled gaps in the literature related to the scope and content of previous studies; it was also unique in that this case study did not focus on the negative—what went wrong, what could have transpired differently, or who was in the wrong role. Instead, the goal was to have a deep understanding of Romania, its education system during the transition, and the impact by and on people and culture. By focusing on acquiring information and not judging, I was able to ask questions that could elicit information that helped to characterize and provide a foundation upon which future studies can be constructed to apply a lens for specific subject or thematic analysis.

As a citizen of a strong democracy situated within a relatively young civilization and culture that enjoys a rich economy and established infrastructure, I was able to provide a unique view of a country like Romania, which was in many ways the inverse: Romania is an older civilization and is much further along in its cultural development than the United States, but has a weaker democracy, struggling economy and dilapidated infrastructure. This viewpoint is essential to my qualitative research because of its unique perspective. In addition, my perspective incorporates cognizance of being ethnically part Romanian and being married to a Romanian-American. Therefore, I brought to bear both experience living in a strong democracy and a cultural understanding of Romania.

In addition to my nationality and personal history with Romania, several other factors enhanced my credibility as a researcher on this particular topic. One such factor was the pool of interviewees, who comprise a group knowledgeable about education in their country. I also brought credibility and trust through the institutional association with the University of Maryland. This background, coupled with my ethnic background, enabled me to quickly establish a level of trust necessary to conduct interesting and informative interviews. Coupled with the literature review, my research provides a next step in understanding the role of education in transition.

After aligning the literature review with my original interviews of Romanian bureaucrats, three emerging phenomena—colonialism, globalization and isomorphism— emerged as forces to be evaluated and considered when exploring the role of education in transitional Romania. To help explain these phenomena, I evaluated the theoretical underpinnings that provide further context and a deeper sense of how these forces may impact decision-making, policy creation, or perspective. While I cannot comment on the

extent to which these concepts can explain both the conscious and subconscious mind, I found significant evidence that these forces were powerful influences on Romania's transition. The literature review and subsequent findings in Chapter IV and Chapter V speak to the need to consider these exogenous forces when evaluating transitional countries and, specifically, education reform within a transitional country. While the findings in the literature review focused on mostly non-Romanian sources due to what exists in the literature being mostly non-Romanian, and the findings in Chapter IV and Chapter V focused on the practical impact of these exogenous forces, among other things, this portion of Chapter VI will focus on the theoretical aspects of the findings. The theoretical perspective achieves both a contextualizing of phenomena as well as a way of attempting to explain reasons for their existence, and ways in which their negative attributes may be mitigated. In short, the theoretical perspective allows for problem-solving in a manner less bounded than with the practical perspective. Together, these two approaches provide a powerful combination for policy and phenomena review.

Through my research, and after much reflection, I have come to understand the relationship of power and identity between colonizers and the formerly colonized countries like Romania not as "the powerless against the powerful," or "the weak against the strong." Rather, the most accurate way of explaining the identity of Romania and relationship toward more powerful countries is through the analogy I cultivated about the octopus. While this analogy may seem inelegant, its accuracy justifies the comparison. Romania is dependent upon more powerful countries for a "frame of reference," as one Interviewee mentioned, and is therefore like the arm of an octopus. Each arm of an octopus has its own central nervous system that controls movements. But, when

summoned by the central brain to swim, for instance, that individual nervous system is over-ridden so that all eight arms can be coordinate in this effort. Therefore, if Romania is an octopus arm, with the other 7 arms representing various other Eastern European countries that were colonized, the EU could be said to be the central brain that has overall control. So, too, could organizations like the World Bank, United Nations, and even countries like the United States, UK, France, China and Japan take turns as the central brain, summoning the various arms, or former colonies, toward a particular end such as with the U.S. and its missile defense system. Citizens of Romania will never say they were once a colony due to indoctrination—not that this recognition is a requisite for this reality—even though they were controlled by the Romans, Ottomans, Hapsburgs, Russians and now the EU. Though they have always followed the lead and preconceived plan of more powerful countries or entities, they have not ceded 100% sovereignty to another nation since the Roman Empire. Therefore, vassal or suzerainty does not apply as cleanly in the first world—third world comparison. Instead, the analogy of the octopus applies—Romania can control its own free will as with the arm of the octopus, but that autonomy can be over-ridden by greater powers, almost caught between freedom and servitude. Whereas *first*, *second*, and *third world* derive from the misinterpretation of a French poem that considered formerly colonized or exploited countries as "tier monde," a new concept must be considered to explain those countries and super-national organizations with the power and authority to control the fates of many countries, and to reflect what used to be called suzerainties, or vassal states, or even colonies, depending on the power relationship. Thus, countries like Romania can be considered brachio [arm] patrida [country], or, patridabrachs and the US and other powerful countries are

patridaarchs, archigos patrida—*head countries* rather than *arm countries*. While every country is connected, it is the arm that is forced to do the will of the head, whereas the head does not do the will of the arm: brach-countries vs. arch-countries represent the relationship of one-way power.

Theoretical Reflections Summary

While the focus of my interviews was heavily directed to the practical aspects of exogenous forces, there are a few key reflections upon the theoretical that must be highlighted. One: there are concepts such as isomorphism, historically applied to institutional change within solely a domestic paradigm, that can be borrowed and applied to understand international forces that precipitate and dictate domestic change, as with the case of the EU and Romania. Also, the concepts discussed in this study, and in particular colonialism and globalization, tend to describe global phenomena. While important for understanding a country's role within that larger context, it is equally important to understand the forces' role within the country. In addition, concepts are a powerful and necessary component of exploring challenges and successes in the field of education, but must always be conducted or applied to examples on the ground, as I have done with this study. This last point is critical, because if theory exists to help explain phenomena, a deeper, individualized understanding is critical when informing leaders or policy-makers on course-corrections or long-term strategic planning for a specific entity. For example, even the context of Eastern Europe was too large of a geographic area to study, which is why the microcosm of Romania was more suitable for a macro-level study of micro-level changes.

Insufficient Change: The Unaltered Core of Romanian Education

While the theoretical reflections are critical to better understanding or explaining the phenomena of colonialism, globalization or isomorphism, the findings from my on-the-ground original research were more directed toward the examination of practical experiences. The main reason for this is that the Romanian bureaucrats were not expected to reflect upon their experiences in terms of the theoretical; instead they were asked to detail their personal impressions of what was significant, and why, in Romanian education before, during and after the transition toward democracy. Fortunately, there was enough shared ground among the responses to draw a few conclusions, which I will further clarify in Chapter VII. In this section, I will review my personal reflections on my research, taking into account the practical nature of my original research, followed by possible directions for education in transitional democracies in Chapter VII.

In reflecting upon the status of Romania's transition and whether its education system has changed and, if so, to what extent, I have discovered that yes, it has changed; however, while it has changed, many attributes of the core remain the same. Interviewee Petre explained this point regarding change:

I don't think that the system in its core has fundamentally changed. I think that there are some improvements that have been made. For example, you have alternative textbooks, so there is no longer only one textbook. You have some part of the curriculum, which can be decided upon by the school. But the school does not have the means to implement what it decides [in every case because]...I have

to go the Ministry and write a formal request that I need this person to come and get some money for the person and so on.

You can say that parts of it are getting better. If you look at numbers, it all depends [upon] what better means. In terms of, for example, performance, you have these international tests, the TIMSS and the PISA**.** These are international tests designed to measure the abilities of students in different fields, like exact sciences or linguistics and so on. And you could say that the system is going down because our results over time are going down, in terms of performance of students. But in other terms, you could say that things are looking up because you have more computers going into schools, for example, you have [some] students in rural areas that now have access to computers and the Internet, somehow, and they're quality of life is better.

So as a whole, you cannot say. You cannot say if it's better, if it's worse, if it's going up or down.

This interviewee's comment reflected an overall sense of Romanian education in that the complexity is too challenging to encapsulate in a simple status report. Based on the literature review and original research, the core of Romanian education retains many core attributes: its pedagogical tendencies continue to be banking- and theory-oriented, its curriculum continues to be focused on theory, its student learning de-emphasizes teamwork and critical thinking, and its administration remains bureaucratic to the point of stasis. Certainly the violent and fearful elements of totalitarianism have been removed in post-coup Romania, but Romanian education still remains relatively unchanged.

As previously discussed, too many reforms were passed and too little focus was put on the very important task of implementation. As Interviewee Mihai explained, there were

> too many changes, not very well-prepared changes. Too fast, also, implementation, and also, during these years, in the field of education, we didn't build some mechanism for debating and for discussing very rational – you know a lot of people in the Ministry of Education can say, "I decide to change this thing." So – and nobody knows…

These changes were orchestrated by an administration that maintained a veil of secrecy without including the public, which led to disenfranchised parents and confused teachers, coupled with an entire generation of students who may have received a very incoherent education of questionable quality. One of the byproducts of these reforms and the uncertainty of the transition goals (that is, to what end were the policies created) is a student body characterized by interviewees as lacking character and motivation. As Interviewee Raul explained, motivation existed during totalitarianism:

> This is one positive aspect that we had previously [during totalitarianism] because the student population was much more selective in terms of academic performance but also in terms of motivation.
>
> *Interviewer: So would you say there used to be more of a meritocracy than there is today?*
>
> Interviewee: Previously, yes. The entry exams were much tougher than they are now, and because of that, people are much more selective. I will give you an example. When I entered, there were 70 [positions] for faculty, today, there are

700 [faculty positions]. So ten times more at the same faculty and only in this

institution, and in one faculty, we have ten faculties. So it multiplied like that

everywhere. This is a good scene because more people will have higher

education, but in terms of performance, sometimes you cannot if he doesn't have

the brains or enough brains or if he doesn't have enough motivation, then it's

difficult...

The lack of student motivation is a serious challenge for Romania. In a free-market

economy and democracy, individual motivation is a critical component of enjoying

freedom by applying skill and character to find and enjoy a vocation, if possible, after

excelling in school or mastering a trade. Without the motivation created by the rigorous

selection methods and limited alternatives of totalitarianism, students may not perform

well in school. While mentioned sporadically in the interview findings as well as with

this Interviewee's comment, character education is equally important in this case,

because without the moral framework that the state used to provide, there is no

scaffolding upon which current students can structure their lives, and it seems that

students and the community at large are waiting for some authority figure to motivate and

manage each respective challenge.

One example of a reason that character, motivation, and democratic education in

general are not valued in Romania supports this concept of a lack of a framework within

which students and the citizens at large can operate within. In particular, a framework can

provide a clearer path within which the student and citizen can operate within, thereby

allow for the understanding that their efforts may yield positive results as opposed to

operating within a confused realm, whereby efforts may not gain traction, thereby

diminishing one's motivation. As it relates to education, Interviewee Raluca discusses how a test can provide a framework, and that if a particular attribute or characteristic is valued but is not featured within a test, a student will not value it:

> I think that another aspect that should be considered when referring to education role is what kind of skills we evaluate as continuing evaluation, continuing assessment, and as well as formative assessment because if, for example, when speaking about the Baccalaureate – at the end of high school in Romania, you have to pass an exam in order to certify that you did it, from the academic perspective. But if you are certifying Romania language, foreign language, math, history, or I don't know what, to which extent, then, what you said you have as a goal of education, citizenship, could be really measured?
>
> Why, then, during the studies, you expect someone to be busy with all these aspects if final assessment goes for other kind of skills? And I think that this final assessment is not encouraging at all behaviors, attitudes, supporting democracy, not necessarily at this age, at 18, but never before.

This interviewee's comments further supported the idea that education in Romania has not changed in its core because it is still test-driven, and that test has not been modified to support or acknowledge the importance of a democratic education. More to the point, the interviewee's comments indicated that behaviors and attitudes were a critical component because, while it may be true that many Romanians could explain how a democracy works in theory, their attitude is still similar to a proletariat and not a democratic citizen, with resulting behaviors that exhibit a sense of apathy and powerlessness. Because the student and the citizen are waiting for a test or other representation of authority to

provide a framework for what to value and how to act, the student and the citizen are passive—not actively seeking to participate within, and change, their reality. Fault in this case is not on that of the student as much as it is on those who create exams and, more broadly, the democratic realm within which the citizenry operate—the elite.

Redirecting the Momentum of History: Romania's Obstacles

Prior to this study, most of the scholarly literature focused on those issues that were quintessentially domestic in Romania, and none connected all three exogenous forces as major factors in Romania's transition. This research was limited because it did not focus on the ongoing external factors, or why the domestic challenges continue.[36] For example, Romania's trajectory of democratic growth did not progress as quickly as that of the Czech Republic or Latvia. The explanation for this reality is uncomplicated: Romania did not have an alternative elite who were both competent in democratic leadership and free of the influence of the totalitarian regime, as evidenced by the fact that those who attained leadership positions within government after the coup were in government before the coup. This finding or realization was not the most profound, however, it is a fact that the Romanian citizenry and government continued in an almost "business-as-usual" fashion when it unhitched itself from Russian and latched onto the EU. This "wagon" metaphor speaks to the fact that Romania has historically been a nation that trails behind others, allowing more powerful countries to drive its fate. This observation could have been a useful one for the EU, which could have allied itself with other partner countries or partner institutions such as the World Bank and supported an

---

[36] Some of the challenges discussed in this study continue today, but are largely discussed within the boundaries of the case study, not simply as ongoing phenomena.

empowered Romania, with an active and informed citizenry. Instead, efforts were made toward short-term goals, such as establishing baselines for engaging in business, banking and the refinement of the judiciary and media. These efforts were, of course, essential to the stability of Romania to ensure that it did not backslide into an authoritarian regime, but not, perhaps, sufficient to create the foundation of an independent democracy.

Transitional democracies are package deals, with many advantages and challenges that cannot be extricated from each other and which all need to be addressed in a timely manner. Those supporting the development of these democracies must think in terms more broad than "law" and "economics"; Romania initially failed to do this and, consequently, did not meet EU requirements in 2005 and barely achieved membership in 2007. Moreover, citizens in these developing democracies must be educated as to their rights and responsibilities. Again, Romania provides a cautionary case: based on my interviews and inferences, the Romanian citizenry do not seem empowered or overly participatory and the education system has not been established to train the next generation of Romanian citizens and leaders. In short, the EU has become Romania's "frame of reference," thereby filling the traditional role long occupied by former colonizers; meanwhile, the Romanian elite and citizenry have fallen into their typical roles: authoritarian and apathetic, respectively.

Who is to blame? Perhaps this is not the most relevant question. The largest challenge, with so many factors in play, is the coordination of efforts to maximize the benefits for a particular transitional country. Because of the one-size-fits-all approach of the World Bank and EU, combined with the generic approach the U.S. government has taken with regard to democratization, historic precedent and culture are often overlooked

in the rush to the democratic end. Instead, focus is placed on the variables or components that must be put in place instead of the context into which these components will be placed. With a more coordinated approach or more culturally or historically focused impact, the factor of coordination would be mitigated. To date, and based on the literature, a successful orchestration of this type has not yet occurred.

Once the formation of the Romanian constitution and the passage of the Education Law of 1995 established a desire to implement an education fit for democracy, there should have been a change in focus from the short-term to the long-term—or at least a better balance between the two. Instead, the political infighting and constantly changing foci left policy change and democratic growth at the mercy of sporadic and undirected development. Consequently, Romanians were poorly prepared for the critical and analytical tasks required of democratic citizens, who must weigh the claims of their representatives and decide their nation's course. Therefore, at the critical juncture five years into Romania's transition, a long-term approach could have mitigated the challenges that Romania faces today and the country could have been on a trajectory to free itself from a history spent in some other country's or institution's shadow. Instead, Romania lost this opportunity, a loss which also proved costly for external institutions and countries that supported its transition. Failed reforms in Romania required human and fiscal resources that, had the initial reforms been successful, could have been directed toward other countries. Moreover, Romania could have developed a more robust economy, which also would have positively impacted the EU. Practically, better knowledge of its history could have informed those both inside and outside Romania to plan a transition that would use the institution of education as a means to help Romania

extract itself from the powerful momentum of history. Had education been a central component of Romania's transition, one may presume that a new batch of leaders would be on the rise, entrepreneurship would be a growth opportunity with an influx of new thinking and the future of the country would seem much brighter.

While seemingly pessimistic, this conclusion indicates that there is still a chance for Romania to redeem itself. As the Romanian bureaucrats stated, reform often means elder generations make way for younger citizens who have a desire and capability to usher in demonstrable change. Romania's hope lies with this younger generation, so long as it does not lose itself as it waits—turning into vinegar instead of a fine wine. Without any additional resources, this potential could be harnessed by revamping the teacher training, refocusing the curriculum, and emphasizing quality instead of hortatory policies that enhance the reputation of the Ministry of Education. Simple applications of true distance-education technologies could provide a baseline of knowledge dispersion onto which "in person" training could fill in the cracks. Distance education would require new technology infrastructure, training on how to implement and utilize and, most importantly, a shift in attitude to embrace its usefulness as a supplemental education mechanism. However, the aversion to distance education in its Western parlance is a limiting factor for a country with insufficient resources and a large geographic area to cover—let alone a poor infrastructure to efficiently travel.

Romania is like a rock that is being pushed uphill. If a few extra steps could be taken, the summit for this country is certainly within reach, followed by the relative joy of the rapid momentum of descent. These extra few steps must come from the people, as the government in any democracy cannot simply impose its will on the citizens; rather it

is up to the government to help create a space within which the citizenry can lead the country to a better place. As long Romania continues to harbor an apathetic citizenry that waits for the government to "do all" as it always has, it will remain the same. But, if education is focused upon as a tool for transitional democratic development, it can transform Romania into a strong democracy with the related benefits of increased autonomy and economic prosperity. To better explain the way in which this is possible for a transitional country like Romania, the following are a few solutions.

Theoretical and Practical Reflections Summary

Romania and other countries in Eastern Europe are in a position of self empowerment if they can harness the power of education to forge new education leaders as well as more engaged and capable citizens. While some Eastern European countries have taken advantage of this opportunity, or have at least been able to advance from a stronger foundation than Romania's, there is still ample and necessary opportunity for improvement. In particular, reform must be approached with a long-term view both in the pace and expectation for policy creation and implementation. Too much change—if poorly coordinated and inconsistently implemented—is not good, even if the end goal is benevolent (in this case, the establishment of a successful democracy and strong education system). The challenge is to find a balance between immediate needs and future needs. The solution is to trust those researchers, policy-makers and other talented Romanians to build a domestic capacity to best utilize international resources from the World Bank, EU or U.S. in a way that is integrated into a broader strategy, and properly coordinated. Through better internal dialogue and trust, a stronger democracy may be

formed and a new chapter can be written for this country and others in Eastern Europe who follow suit. If these steps are not taken, the legacy of colonialism will continue and historic power structures will remain in place. Fortunately, there are many opportunities for Romania that will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION AND TOPICS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The Study's Original Contribution

The following description of my study reexamines my perspective, approach and execution of a bounded case study that focused on post-coup Romania and its education system amidst transition from totalitarianism toward democracy between 1989 and 2007. Although no single methodology is flawless, accessing the human element behind decision-making particularly necessitates an investigation into why decisions were made without applying judgment or negative criticism. A purely quantitative analysis would explore only the *what* of the events that unfolded as opposed to a qualitative analysis, which discusses the *why* of events. Of all the qualitative methods available for my study of Romanian education, the most effective and appropriate method would allow me to explore a bounded period of time without overly constraining the perspectives of the elite or the documents they created and employed: a case study. Therefore, I studied transitional Romania with key consideration about the elite and their roles. To support this analysis, however, I used relevant quantitative studies to supplement my qualitative analysis, as they provided necessary assessments of various sub-questions such as democratic competency within the IEA study. Although I focused on the time period after the Romanian coup d'état of 1989, I did not limit relevant information that may pre-date that event.

Characteristics of the Study

Among other qualitative methodologists, I have drawn case study structures from Robert Yin (2003), Sharan Merriam (1998) and Robert Stake (1995). By combining document (policy) assessment; qualitative and quantitative literature; and original research via interviews with Romanian educators, I explored how Romania has made strides as a country amidst a challenging transition towards democracy, with special attention focused on its context for change amidst many exogenous and domestic forces.

Although reform continues to occur today, January 1, 2007 is a fitting end to the case because Romania completed accession into the EU, a literal and symbolic unification of Romania to the whole of democratic Europe. The context for democratic transition in Eastern Europe will incorporate exogenous forces that each country faced and still faces: neo- and traditional colonialism, globalization and isomorphism. Finally, this research provided suggestions for Romanian elite to work within these contexts by challenging short-term thinking and incorporating alternatives such as long-term ecological perspectives. Furthermore, in this chapter I will discuss the incorporation of democratic values that may mitigate negative aspects of globalized consumerism in Romania. The potential result of these alternatives could include the empowerment of the Romanian elite as partners and contributors in both domestic and global decision-making, with implications for Eastern Europe and beyond.

Data Collection

The data I collected are a combination of a deep and broad literature review and document analysis with the support of interviews with bureaucrats who held or now hold positions of influence in Romania's education system. I collected significant quantities of many documents, articles and books to provide a context for my interviews, which were conducted in person. The combination of both documentary analysis and original interviews yielded a study that is comprehensive. The challenge was in allowing for the interview data to exist without being overly constrained by the document analysis; this was achieved by keeping as many of the interview quotations intact with little paraphrasing that might have diminished the role of the interviews and, by extension, the voice of the Romanians. The overarching contribution of this study was to fill the gap in the literature relating to the context for education reform with a significant focus on the voice of the Romanian bureaucrat. By triangulating this original research with my literature review, I was able to explore a very complex transition from totalitarianism toward democracy. Through this case study, I have uncovered or created various possible directions for transitional countries as well as countries seeking to improve their democratic system. Specifically, I have cultivated ways in which education can play a stronger role in both democratic transition as well as continued sustainability via the incorporation of a new dimension in democratic analysis, long-term thinking, a refocusing of indicators of successful transition and ecological principles which support democratic strengthening, which I will discuss in the next few sections.

Possible Direction 1: Transition as 3-dimensional Reform

One of the most significant ways in which my study is an original contribution to the field of education research is in its exploration of the case of a country in transition and of the three-dimensional nature of that transition. While concepts such as the "J curve" are helpful in a two-dimensional sense, I have discovered that transition has three dimensions, which take into account the axis of *historical and cultural context*. While I do not believe transition or democratization can easily fit into a chart or graph, some level of quantification helps in the explanation and understanding of an otherwise complicated and convoluted phenomenon. "Reform over time" is the traditional or common approach to understanding this concept, and in this case, a country in transition: was the transition fast or slow?; did the transition experience peaks and troughs and missed opportunities?; were reforms implemented?; and what could have changed in terms of the timing of reforms to improve the net result? This two-dimensional and often bimodal approach omits the legacy of history and culture, which could be identified by what I consider the z-Axis. Moreover, there is no climax in democratic development; therefore, the value of Y on Bremmer's J curve should not be finite. However, it is understood that the functional stability of a strong democracy can be reached, where the curve is no longer as steep and therefore represents stability while continuing to address the z-Axis issues of equality and equity via exploring the implications of history and culture. Therefore, because all democratic countries are on an arc of transition that is three-dimensional, additional factors must routinely be examined. Otherwise, two-dimensional solutions will undermine challenges in a three-dimensional reality, such as with the Romanian case. This case acknowledges the fact that Romania lacked an alternative elite and was devoid

of a grass-roots desire for democracy but rather freedom. The z-Axis, however, brings

about the third dimension, the personalization or humanization of a transition, and one of

the most challenging aspects of transition to quantify, as discussed in the previous

chapter. Through my qualitative study, I explored the power of history and how the past

impacts the present. By applying this concept, the case of Romania can be better

understood, which of course provides information for its continued transition as well as

the transition of future or other nascent democracies. For illustrative purposes, in the

figure below, I have re-presented the J curve, per Bremmer's theory of democratic

transition.

Figure 9: The J curve Re-presented
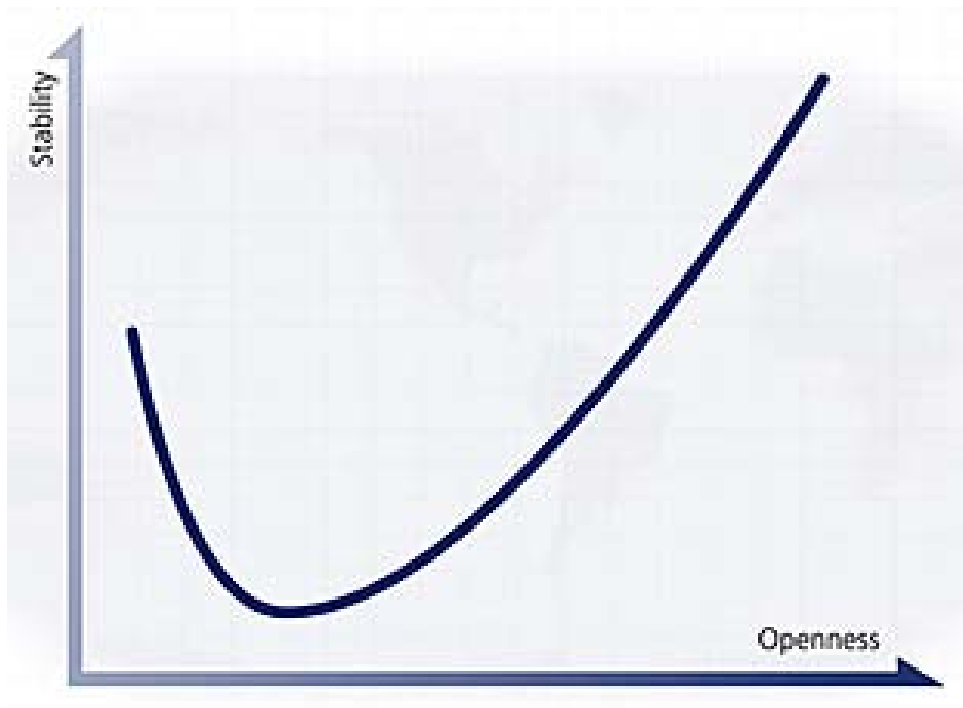
When factoring in my concept of the z-Axis of history and cultural context, transition is acknowledged as being three-dimensional. Therefore, the above two-dimensional J curve of Authority (y-Axis) and Openness (x-Axis) may really appear less clean-cut or clear when introducing the historical and cultural context (z-Axis).

As this case study has made clear, transition is not clear-cut or two-dimensional; many factors other than politics and economics must be considered through the lens of history and context, which allow for the consideration of the humanitarian costs of transition, equality and equity. With the force of cultural context, at the center of which is a country's history, the J curve suddenly appears more complicated and disjointed—but therefore far more accurate to reality. While I believe the J curve remains a strong tool for explaining or exploring trends in a democracy's transition, it does not allow for the factor of history and does not represent the whole reality. This z-Axis, a topic for future study, could help provide an additional layer of analysis which would prove to inform better all parties involved and better utilize resources, both people and fiscal, to yield stronger results during a transition.

During a transition, education is the institution best-suited to mitigate the negative effects of those elements which skew the x-Axis. As the only institution charged with the duty of cultivating the next generation of leaders and citizens, this is the best institution to resolve historical legacies—both positive and negative—and prepare both the country and the individual for an improved future. Education can also help a country "evolve" out of historical precedent and escape the gravitational pull of status quo. By first acknowledging this factor and then exploring the original concept of the z-Axis, my

study's original contribution is clear: education must be a central component to the

creation and maintenance of democracies and free market economies.

Possible Direction 2: Policy-making amidst transition

An additional solution to consider is the application of what I call "Open Curtain"

Policy. "Open Curtain" Policy denotes a process by which policy creation and

implementation is charted in confluence with exogenous efforts, both domestic and

international, to uncover patterns, both intended and unintended. In effect, the curtain that

segments various systems is pulled to expose concurrent efforts in other sectors, as

presented in Figure 10:

Figure 10: Open-Curtain Policy
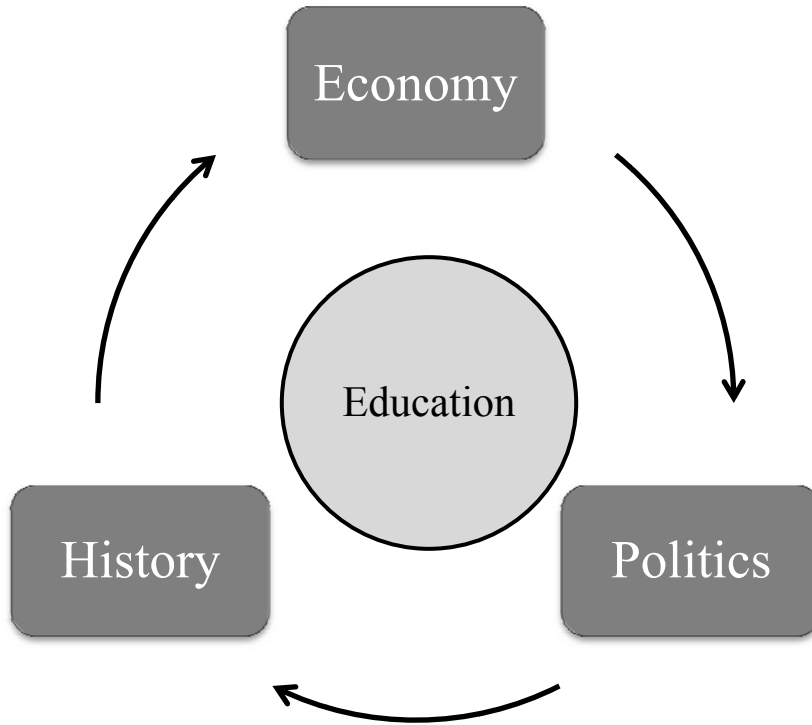
Without "Open Curtain" Policy, the stage is set for domestic and exogenous reform

efforts to be planned and executed without consideration for harmonization or alignment.

In fact, without "Open Curtain" Policy, exogenous forces can actually create conflicts

and magnify challenges that would otherwise evolve away. For instance, if Romania is

implementing a domestic law that does not harmonize with an EU policy, the

combination may lead to a gridlock of action or misapplication of efforts. However, if

"Open Curtain" Policy is implemented, EU advisors will know about the domestic law,

and Romanian policy-makers will understand the implications for European policy.

Moreover, "Open Curtain" Policy would allow for the essential element of intention to be

part of the process. For example, an EU representative may have presumed that

Romanian citizens truly wanted democracy, when in reality it is plausible that Romanians wanted life free from tyranny, and simply chose democracy as the best or most familiar alternative. With a better understanding of intentions, the groundwork for policy must then be explored to determine the best approach, speed and duration for policy reform because democratization is a long-term process that should have ten-, 20- and 50-year timelines. Otherwise, the risk for misapplication or failure of policy and law remains high, and quite costly—financially to donor organizations and in terms of quality of life for citizens in a country like Romania. In short, solutions may become clearer if looked at over the long-term, as suggested in the next section.

Possible Direction 3: Refining Indicators of a Strong Democracy

One way to create a long-term approach is to consider the many factors that influence a citizen's quality of life in a democracy. Quite often, economic factors can undermine an otherwise strong democracy. Moreover, these economic factors can slow or freeze a democracy's progress toward equal representation for all citizens. However, there are additional factors to consider. One way of shifting expectations to consider a long-term perspective on democratization is to incorporate other indicators of quality, such as citizen happiness and quality of life, the latter of which would strongly consider ecological principles. One way to quantify these otherwise abstract concepts is through the use of political and cultural journalist Judith Levine's concept of country indicators (2006). Instead of measuring the economic success of a country only in dollars, Levine raised the notion that other quality of life indices are needed. For example, wealth alone does not guarantee happiness (McMahon, 2006). Therefore, to measure the success of a

country's transition, Levine suggested that a change in perspective is needed. Her suggested solution exists

> [t]o gauge how an economy is doing on the human-happiness scale. Redefining progress…has developed an alternative to the gross domestic product, called the Genuine Progress Indicator [GPI]. Instead of adding up all the dollars spent in the economy…the GPI looks at what the dollars are spent on, by whom, and how much they enhance or worsen people's lives; it also assigns values to nonmonetary benefits and costs (Levine, 2006, p. 258).

The Genuine Progress Indicator can measure a country's progress and, as an indicator, reflect how a change in perspective can help alter the course of democratization, for example. The GPI is also an example of how a country like Romania can gauge its progress in changing to incorporate a new form of government, new economic system and new values within its education. Educating citizens about changing the indicators used to examine their lives, just like evaluating how the tools of a society are used to gauge modernity, can make an individual the focal point of action and will thus lessen his or her dependency on governments, especially fragile, transitional governments. In turn, GPI maybe the impetus to provide motivation and shift citizen expectations from "tell me what to do" to "here is what I am going to do" by acknowledging the paradigm and relationship between civic responsibilities government responsibilities—a concept new to Romania.

The GPI, in other words, is a chart upon which a person's actions can be plotted in such a way that the individual can gauge whether or not action is positive or negative. For example, as Levine explained,

in the GPI asset column, one enters the value of unremunerated time spent on

housework, child care, and volunteering. Deficits include "defensive

expenditures" such as hospital bills for car accidents, prison costs, and the

"depreciation" of old-growth forests. As you can imagine, America's GPI does

not look as rosy as its ever-expanding GDP (2006, p. 258).

If a serious dialogue ensued focused on GPI, individual change could be put in the

forefront of the discussion about national change. However, national action is a

combination of government and individual civic action. Therefore, individual action must

become a priority because national policy alone does not suffice in a democracy. Lastly,

negative effects of globalization must be challenged in the United States as well as in

Western European countries that, in turn, influence and guide the transition of countries

in Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, countries must define the ways in which history and culture

manifest themselves in a new democracy, and with various global forces at play. As

Levine wrote "[i]n the end, it's a matter of how you, or you collectively as a nation,

define prosperity and poverty, abundance and scarcity—a question of what 'you,' the

nation, the culture, desire" (2006, p. 259). As previously mentioned, education as a

system is one of the best, if not the only, ways to instill and therefore alter a country's

values during a reform process. Perhaps by addressing the way in which Romania must

empower the citizenry to better understand and therefore shoulder individual

responsibility, it will be increasing its own GPI and strengthen its democracy.

Possible Direction 4: Revisiting Democracy Exportation

Complicit with the spread of globalization is the spread of democratization, which creates great opportunity for countries in transition if key factors are achieved. For example, the model of democracy education must be reexamined. Since education is the instrument that can support democracy development, it is crucial for democratic education to be expanded. Democracy expert Diamond (1997) observed that "[i]f democracy is to be deepened, reformed, and consolidated […] three broad challenges confront the mission of civic education,": generating "demand from below"; developing citizens' abilities to "make democracy work;" and cultivating the "values, norms and practices that make democracy governable" (p. 1). By considering the untapped potential in employing democracy as a form of government, it may be possible to empower individual countries instead of spreading a homogenous template. In addition, Diamond proposed that citizenship education must be expanded to incorporate the principles of "peace—and thus security; political and social justice; respect for the physical environment, and human dignity for all people, no matter their color, culture, or faith" (1997 p. 2). These values do not threaten any national constitution or other national interests; rather, a revised democratic education may increase the power of education to incorporate global principles and linkages as a solution to the negative effects of globalization.

Possible Direction 5: Democratic ecology

Within the current force of globalization, opportunities for change exist on a large scale, especially for countries transitioning toward democracy, by considering long-term ramifications of development through consideration of ecological principles. Romania does still have time to redress some of the errors it has made during the last 20 years and avoid or prepare for certain future challenges. Democratic theory only incorporates anthropocentric thinking, derived in part from the meaning of the word *democracy*: "of the people." Because they are historically human-oriented, current democracies do not incorporate ecological thinking. In due course, democratic theory can be advanced to accommodate ecological thinking and incorporate broader considerations such as the actual physical environment within which a democracy is placed—its ecological environment—and how jeopardizing this environment can destabilize a democracy.

By merging democratic theory with the principles of ecology, it is possible for nation-states to empower themselves within the context of globalization by tapping into the plethora of solutions that exist worldwide. If a country desires to educate citizens about their local environment while preparing students for a global economy, one viable solution would be for democratic theory to incorporate ecological perspectives. Thinking ecologically, for example, is thinking about the long-term effects of an individual or group of individuals.[37] Ecological thinking can help shift the perspective of democracy to

---

[37] For example, BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill represents short-term thinking about revenue generation over the potential risk of an unstoppable leak. This spill signifies a mindset of cost-benefit only terms of money, but not in terms of the physical destruction of the Gulf Cost habitat for humans and animals, and moreover, the significant resources and attention that will be drawn away from other important causes toward the cleanup efforts.

incorporate this mindset, which considers future generations of individual countries and, collectively, the world. Although this solution is not a concrete theory, the following suggestions can supplement the concepts I have put forward such as the z-Axis, "Open Curtain" Policy, increasing education's role in a transition, and shifting indicators of successful democratization as previously outlined.

The process of merging democratization and ecological thinking and its resulting actions may mitigate the negative effects of globalization and consumerism. Which principles of ecology are in consideration? Although an exhaustive list of all ecological principles does not exist, the Ecological Society of America (ESA) published a report in 2000 that lists the following as core ecological principles:

(1) examine impacts of local decisions in a regional context, (2) plan for long-term change and unexpected events, (3) preserve rare landscape elements and associated species, (4) avoid land uses that deplete natural resources, (5) retain large contiguous or connected areas that contain critical habitats, (6) minimize the introduction and spread of nonnative species, (7) avoid or compensate for the effects of development on ecological processes, and (8) implement land-use and management practices that are compatible with the natural potential of the area. (p. 632)

Given these eight core principles, it is evident that caring for land and the surrounding environment is congruent with the principles of democratic government. Instead of undermining democratic theory or democratic governments, the result of applying these principles are governments and citizens that collectively care for both the planet and all its inhabitants. Because the basic principles of both democracy and ecology are

compatible, merging them is a logical step in sustaining the physical space that a democracy and its people inhabit.

The Case of Hong Kong

Versions of democratic ecology citizenship education are not without precedent, and the United States and the EU are not the only examples .In Hong Kong, the notion of citizenship education has been recently expanded beyond the nation-state to "include world ecology; global, social, and economic relations; and world religions" (Law, 2004, p. 254). This expansion allows for students as citizens to understand both national and global interests. As a result, students may exhibit more compassion for humans who live outside their country's borders. According to Law, the Hong Kong case is unique in that citizenship education incorporates an appreciation for the

> heritage of human civilizations and the world's diversity. Lessons also relate global citizenship to individuals' duties and responsibilities. Ultimately, their goal is to give students the tools to analyze the problems, causes, and solutions associated with such issues as global ecology, world peace, and fair distribution of resources. (2004, p. 259)

By teaching both domestic citizenship and global citizenship, students will become more prepared to face or possibly avoid catastrophes related to the ecological crisis.

The Case of Romania

Hong Kong is not alone in reforming its citizenship education and exhibiting some of the principles of democratic ecology citizenship education. In the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, Romanian students had to learn wholly different skills

322

and the school system needed to adapt, but nationwide policies were slow to support democratic reform due to the previously addresses poor implementation and weak overall strategy. In a case study researching Romania, Tibbitts (2001) suggested that Romania was slow to change nationwide citizenship education because in "countries undergoing rapid political and economic change, there may be many, even conflicting, emerging ideas of political identity among important groups" (p. 27). Tibbitts found one source of the problem to be the fact that schools are very important in the development of values in a democracy, but the idea of which values to adopt and how a good citizen is defined must be carefully considered.

A few schools in Romania attempted to incorporate ecological principles into their citizenship education reform as part of the solution to defining the good citizen. With regard to democratic development, "the Romanian study appears to confirm the results of others that have shown a clear link between instructional methodology and the development of participatory attitudes, or 'civic behavior', in students" (Tibbitts, 2001, p. 38). Students were therefore educated to be a part of the solution via participation in policy change. For example, if a student believed in a particular ecological cause, he or she could collaborate with other citizens and pressure the government toward a solution instead of waiting for government to solve the problem. Thus, citizens who participated could spark change and spur government to take action to solve problems that the government may otherwise not prioritize. By coupling positive participatory attitudes with "social order, politeness, national security, peace, respect for tradition, faith in God and harmony with nature," students in the Romanian schools Tibbitts studied were actually learning democratic ecology citizenship lessons(p. 38). Although this study is a

positive example in Romania, it only occurred in a few schools and has not been applied throughout the country.

Possible Direction 6: Education to mitigate isomorphism

For citizens to band together and support substantive democratic transition, government must help create a space in which to implement this change. The government should be the keystone to solving issues that can at first seem unrelated to democratic transition such as ecology and democratic development in general. Failure to address these issues early on can hinder the success and sustainability of would-be democracies. Due to the immensity of the ecological crisis and government's ability to make macro-policy shifts, governments can sometimes be the source of the problem if they do not take action. Via reformation, citizenship education may help place government on the solving end of the crisis. For example, in the article "Ecological Democracy and Sustainable Development," Dietz et al. (2001) pointed to the type of democracy Western countries have developed and promoted. Western governments were inherently unfriendly toward the environment, some more than others. Dietz et al. (2001) also observed that "while democratic societal discourse seems essential for effective engagement with environmental problems, such discourse may require structural supports that goes beyond those sufficient for traditional liberal democracy" (p. 12). Liberal democracy, in this case, is exemplified by Western democracies that have a top-down administration with elected representatives. Western democracies, namely the United States, place more value in government representatives than in the citizenry itself. Liberal democracies thus differ from deliberative democracy, which is defined as "a school of political theory that

assumes that genuinely representative public participation in decision-making has the potential to produce policy decisions that are more just and more rational than actually existing representative mechanisms" (Baber, 2004, p. 332). Therefore, empowering citizens is necessary because representatives in liberal democracies do not always act in the interests of their constituents and do not always enable democratic action to flourish. With the incorporation of ecological principles and the powerful impact of combined individual action, democracies will be strengthen as these citizens become empowered, better informed and less likely to simply rely blindly on the government for everything.

Topics for Further Study

In addition to the macro-level topics mentioned in the previous section regarding the use of the theoretical tool of the z-Axis, the general emphasis on education as the tool for long-term transition and short-term stability, and the incorporation of ecological principles for strengthening and ensuring the sustainability of democracies, other practical factors will need further exploration. While the following section does not wholly encapsulate all aspects of what must also be considered with regard to Romania's transition, they are issues that require further study.

Special Needs Education

The issue of special needs education and special needs treatment is a pressing issue that must be addressed and studied further in Romania. During my trip to Romania, I witnessed a surprising lack of handicap ramps or elevators to support the physically handicapped in accessing stores or public transportation. Comments from those with

whom I spoke illustrated the low priority of this matter and the inconvenience it would impose for non-handicapped individuals. This same attitude exists toward special needs education, possibly as a byproduct of communist educational values. Further observational data based on conversations insinuated that, during communism, special needs children were separated from others and were not "counted" in testing, nor were they provided with equal care or attention. An alarming lack of information on special needs education during communist times exists, and the exclusionary attitude against these students remains, whether the disability is emotional, intellectual or physical.

For example, schools do not all have and are not required to have a special needs teachers or departments and often do not even have a school counselor on staff, as Interviewee Dan explained:

> we did a sort of screening, in some schools, and at least three children – sometimes even more – in a classroom – they don't have [support] because you need the professional person to tell this, but they have a behavior that is very much alike, and it is very important, too, so they have a potential, let's say, a potential of this. Of course, teachers need help for other – expert for other – but unfortunately, Romania only – big, large schools have a counselor or a psychologue [psychologist]**.** The smaller schools, they cannot – they are not allowed to hire such a person.

Without even the basic starting point of a school counselor, special needs children, including the physically handicapped, too, have a long, uphill battle to fight. While exogenous studies by UNICEF and anti-discrimination law indicate that minor efforts were made after the fall of communism, the continued hiding of information and under-

recognition of this group undermines potential growth of this area, and it remains an area for future study as a human rights issue.

Orphans

Prior to my research, I spoke with a U.S.-based, American citizen who is an expert on the orphans of Romania. While I opted to not include his comments in this study because I wanted to focus on the voices of the Romanians, I do wish to paraphrase a conversation I had with him in 2008. In short, he said there are as many orphans in Romania today as there were during Ceauşescu's time due to a culture of comfort that existed under communism for unknown reasons,[38] when many parents had to abandon their children for economic or political reasons. Consequently, such abandonment, which now occurs primarily for economic reasons, is not viewed as negatively in Romania as it is in other countries. More recently, Romanians abandon their children to work the strawberry fields in Spain, a carryover from communism but now for economic reasons. While the EU cannot be blamed for this problem because it opened the door for countries like Romania to have their citizenry work throughout the region, insufficient attention has been paid to the lives of orphans as well as this overall phenomenon. Moreover, the EU must increase the sophistication of its assessment mechanisms and not allow for some in the Romanian government to play a game of "shells" and spread the orphans throughout the country to create the appearance of a declining orphan population when in reality, it is about the same.

---

[38] Based on observation, the reason may be that the "state" would take care of the children if the individual could not.

Role of Development partners

A real focus must be placed on evaluating the role of development partners for Romania, Eastern Europe and any country in transition. In short, development partners, including the EU; World Bank USAID; and countries such as the U.K., France, Japan and the U.S. must carefully consider how they spend their resources. From my perspective, the return on investment of democratic development is poor. While the overall number of democratic countries has increased over the last 60 years, the poor quality, strength and sustainability of these countries brings about the question of how to best utilize funding toward this end. Moreover, countries like Romania and others in (or soon to be in) transition must consider the disparate and uncoordinated efforts of these various organizations and how they each fit into a broader, domestically-driven strategy. While obvious in retrospect, the poorly coordinated efforts of the various entities that provided support to Romania were not part of a broad strategy, thereby reducing efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, and outside the scope of merely considering economic factors, real damage can be done to the student and citizen in these countries when policies are ill-timed, too frequent, or laden with an agenda that is not beneficial. Foreign aid does appear to preserve a colonizer-colonized type relationship, since the majority of the funding and resources come from the former colonizers and go to countries that are traditionally colonized. However, this field has great potential if it could focus on long-term policy and put education at the centerpiece of development.

Conclusion

In essence, this study is an homage to education and a lament about the ways it is continually neglected as an institution of nation-building and citizenship development. In relation to Romania, through my literature review, document analysis and interviews, I was able to provide a clear, in-depth case study about its transition. Even with all of the findings, I am still left with many questions. As I came to my final stages of writing this study, Tom Friedman of the *New York Times* wrote an article about Iraq and democratic development that had a striking resemblance to the question I would now pose to Romania's elite and citizenry. Friedman wrote:

> from the very beginning of the U.S. intervention in Iraq and the effort to build some kind of democracy there, a simple but gnawing question has lurked in the background: Was Iraq the way Iraq was (a dictatorship) because Saddam was the way Saddam was, or was Saddam the way Saddam was because Iraq was the way Iraq was — a collection of warring sects incapable of self-rule and only governable with an iron fist? (New York Times, 2010).

This comment made me question the following: was the Romanian leadership the way it was (retaining authority) because the elite were the way they were (also retaining authority) or was the inverse true? To answer his question, Friedman continued:

> In many ways, Iraq is a test case for the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's dictum that 'the central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.' Ironically, though, it was the neo-conservative Bush team that argued that culture didn't matter in Iraq, and that the

prospect of democracy and self-rule would automatically bring Iraqis together to bury the past (New York Times, 2010).

This central question has been at the epicenter of many studies about democratic transition, i.e., does the political system drive societal reform, regardless of culture, to achieve the fulfillment of a strong democracy, or does the culture and precedent of history leave an indelible mark on the outcome of development despite the political system? These bimodal perspectives rarely encapsulate the reality within which decisions are made, which is the main impetus for creating the z-Axis: to acknowledge the third-dimension of democratic theory and democratic education. With the case of Romania, it requires and deserves more than an either/or, bimodal solution. Moreover, because education is the only institution within a political system whose core potential is to not only provide skill-building but also instill an understanding of culture and cultivate a comprehension of politics, perhaps Friedman, Moynihan and Bush were all close, but wrong—like so many in the development policy world and colonizing world before that.

Each country, in educating its population, creates the culture it deserves measured by the resources and effort put into shaping all of the elements that comprise education (Barzun, 1989). Likewise, each country empowers a population through education for a political system it deserves, measured by the framework and expectations it places upon the actors of the education system. Therefore, if Romania truly wants a strong democracy and independence from colonizers and neocolonizers, it must create an education system it desires—and one it deserves. When this happens, Romania can represent for Eastern Europe and all transitional democracies a new way of democratizing through knowledge, practice and application. Because education is a cultural institution, it is only education

that can cause a societal shift which can determine the success of a democracy and forge

a new tradition.

Glossary

The following key terms are defined for the purpose of my case study:

Colonialism: the act of an aggressor country taking control by force or threat of force a

      less powerful country who concedes by defeat or to avoid bloodshed elements of

      ruling the country so as to no longer be wholly sovereign; also, the theory which

      critically explores this phenomenon.

Colonization: the act of populating or taking control of a country; used as a term

      interchangeably with colonialism.

Decentralization: the act by a democratic government by which responsibility and

      authority are disseminated from a central institution or entity throughout the

      country into local hubs.

Democracy: a form of government whereby officials are elected to represent the

      citizenry; a system of checks and balances that mitigates tendencies toward

      increasing the authority of government; a form of government that is often

      considered Western.

Democratic Education: a type of education that supports a democratic government

      by educating the citizenry to be able to participate in a democratic system;

      democratic education can be integrated into many subject areas and through

      various methods of instruction, but is often taught in civics courses.

Democratization: the process by which a country progresses toward the establishment of

      a strong, stable and functioning democracy; considered to be a long-term process.

Elite, Bureaucratic Elite: Elected, appointed or hired officials within the government or

organizations with the ability to create, impact, or implement policy, law or the

course of actions for a country; for those interviewed elite, they held or now hold

positions of influence within the Ministry of Education or organizations which

impact education.

Globalization: a phenomenon by which ideas, goods, values and traditions are spread in

an ever-increasing rate throughout the world; a theory that critically evaluates the

various ways in which globalization impacts countries or individuals.

Isomorphism: a phenomenon by which institutions or entities foster homogenization or

assimilation through mimicry, coercion or normative means; also a theory that

critically evaluates the phenomenon of isomorphism.

Modernization: the act of modernizing or developing to incorporate increasingly

sophisticated uses of technology or infrastructure; a theory that critically evaluates

the impact of modernization; also used interchangeably with modernism.

Neocolonialism: a phenomenon with the same attributes as colonialism but without the

obvious or overt tactics which require a physical presence; a subtle version of

colonialism with an equally powerful effect.

Transition: a country's movement from one form of government toward a new form of

government; not always linear or with clear-cut normative markers of assessment;

a time of potential instability as a country *transitions*.

Bibliography

Allison, G. & Zelikow, P. (1999). *The Essence of Decision*, 2nd Edition. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

Appiah, K (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers:* New York, W.W. Norton & Company.

Badea, Dan et al. (2001). "The Romania Education System National Report."

Baber, W. F. (2004). Ecology and Democratic Governance: Toward a Deliberative Model of Environmental Politics. *The Social Science Journal, 41*(3), 331–346.

Bahmueller, C. F., & Quigley, C. N. (1991). *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education*: Center for Civic Education.

Banks, J. (2001): *Citizenship Education and Diversity: Implications for Teacher Education:* Journal of Teacher Education.

Barber, B. R. (2003). *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy*. New York, New York: WW Norton & Company.

Burbules & Torres, 2000. *Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives:* New York, Routledge.

Bassler, T. (2005). *Learning to Change: The Experience of Transforming Education in South East Europe*: Central European University Press.

Benavot, A. (1996). Education and Political Democratization: Cross-National and Longitudinal Findings. *Comparative Education Review, 40*(4), 377.

Behr, E. (1991). *Kiss the Hand you Cannot Bite*: New York, Villard.

Bernhard, M., Reenock, C., & Nordstrom, T. (2004). The Legacy of Western Overseas Colonialism on Democratic Survival. *International Studies Quarterly, 48*(1), 225-250.

Birzea, C. (1996). "Education Reform and Power Struggles in Romania." [Electronic Version]. European Journal of Education, Volume 31. No.1. Paris: European Institute of Education and Social Policy.

Brechin, S. R. (2003). Comparative Public Opinion and Knowledge on Global Climatic Change and the Kyoto Protocol: The US versus the World? *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 23*(10), 106-134.

Bremmer, I. (2006). *The J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall*: New York, Simon & Schuster.

Breneman, D. W. (1990). Are We Losing Our Liberal Arts Colleges? *AAHE Bulletin, 43*(2), 6.

Carothers, T. (1996). *Assessing Democracy Assistance: the Case of Romania*: Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Carothers, T. (1999). *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment.

Carnoy, M., & Rhoten, D. (2002). What Does Globalization Mean for Educational Change? A Comparative Approach. *Comparative Education Review, 46*(1), 1-9.

Chase-Dunn, C., & Grimes, P. (1995). World-Systems Analysis. *Annual Reviews in Sociology, 21*(1),387-417.

Cohen-Tanugi, L. (2005). The End of Europe? *Foreign Affairs, 84*(6), 55-67.

Dale, V. H., Brown, S., Haeuber, R. A., Hobbs, N. T., Huntly, N., Naiman, R. J., et al. (2000). Ecological Principles and Guidelines for Managing the Use of Land. *Ecological Applications, 10*(3), 639-670.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education*: New York: Macmillan.

Diamond, L. (1997). Cultivating Democratic Citizenship: Education for a New Century of Democracy in the Americas. *Social Studies, 88*(6), 244–251.

Diamond, L. J., & Plattner, M. F. (2002). *Democracy After Communism*: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dietz, T., York, R., & Rosa, E. A. (2001). Ecological Democracy and Sustainable Development. *Open Meeting of the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Research Community, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. October, 8*.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review, 48*(2), 147-160.

Dirlik, A. (2002). Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and The Nation. *Interventions, 4*(3), 428-448.

Ekiert, Grzegorz; Hanson, Stephen *(eds.)* (2003)*: Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe: Assessing the Legacy of Communist Rule* (Vol. 6).

Elmore, R.C. & Sykes, G. (1992). "Curriculum Policy," pp. 185-195. In P.W. Jackson (Ed), Handbook of Research on Curriculum. New York: MacMillan.

Finkel, S, et. al. (2006). "An Assessment of: "Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building: Results of a Cross-National Quantitative Study." (www.usaid.gov)

Fiszbein, A. (2001). *Decentralizing education in transition societies*: World Bank Washington, DC.

Fowler, F. C. (2000). Defining policy; Synopsis of types of policies, pp. 9-13; 239-245; and 249-255. In Author, Policy studies for educational leaders. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Freire, P. (1983). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Myra Bergman Ramos, Trans.)*. New York: Continuum.

Freyberg-Inan, A. (2001). *The Ghosts in Our Classrooms, or: John Dewey Meets Ceausescu,* Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag.

Gallagher, T. (2005). *Modern Romania: The End of Communism, the Failure of Democratic Reform, and the Theft of a Nation: New York, New York University Press.*

Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*. Penguin Books. New York, New York, 1999.

Georgescu, D. A. (1997). *Secondary education in Romania*: Council of Europe Press, Strasbourg.

Ginsburg, Mark, et al. (2010). Reforming Educational Governance and Management in Egypt: National and International Actors and Dynamics. *Education policy analysis archives, vol. 18, no 5*. Arizona State University.

Gunther, T. (2002). Place-Based Decision Support Systems: A Bridge Between Democracy and Sustainability. *Human Ecology Review, 9*(1), 64-66.

Gutmann, A (2002). *Democratic Education:* Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Iliescu, I. (2003). "Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century and its Role in the Advancement of Romania" [Electronic version]. *Higher Education in Europe*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1.

Jelavich, B. (1991). *History of the Balkans*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Kapstein, E. et al. (1997): *Sustaining the Transition: The Social Safety Net in Postcommunist Europe:* New York, Council on Foreign Relations.

Kennedy, K. (1997). *Citizenship Education and the Modern State:* Washington, D.C., Taylor & Francis.

King, C. (2004). *The Black Sea*: Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Kingdon, J. (2003). *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, pp. 1-4, 15-89. New York, Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers

Law, W. W. (2004). Globalization and Citizenship Education in Hong Kong and Taiwan. *Comparative Education Review, 48*(3), 253-273.

Lawton et al. (2000). *Education for Citizenship:* New York, Continuum.

Levin, H. (1981). *Education and Organizational Democracy*: Washington, D.C., National Institution of Education.

Levine, J. (2006). *Not Buying it: My Year without Shopping*. New York: Free Press, Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Lindblom, C. (1959). "The Science of Muddling Through." Public Administration Review, 14.

MacEwan, A. (1999). *Neo-liberalism Or Democracy?: Economic Strategy, Markets, and Alternatives for the 21st Century*: Zed Books.
Malen, B. (2006). Class Lecture notes: April 27; March 13.

Malen, B. & Knapp, M. (1997). "Rethinking the Multiple Perspectives Approach to Education Policy Analysis: Implications for Policy-Practice Connections. Journal of Education Policy, 12.

McCormick, J. (2005). *Understanding the European Union*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

McLaughlin, M.W. (1987). "Learning from Experience: Lessons from Policy Implementation. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis," 9: 171-178.

McMahon, D. M. (2006). *Happiness: A History*: New York, Grove Press.

McMichael. 1996. *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pineforge.

Memmi, A. (2003). *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. New York: James & James/Earthscan.

Mehmet, G. (1999): "The Latest State of the Art: Economic Development Theorizing Since 1980" in *Westernizing the Third World.* New York, New York: Routledge.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*: San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mowat, R.B. (1915). *Select Treaties and Documents to Illustrate the Development of the Modern European States-System*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 79-83.

Nicolaïdis, K. (2004). We, the Peoples of Europe. *Foreign Affairs, 83*(6), 97-110.

Nicolescu, L. (2002). "Reforming higher education in Romania" [Electronic version], *European Journal of Education 37*, No. 1. Paris: European Institute of Education and Social Policy.

Plumwood, V. (1995). Has Democracy Failed Ecology?-An Ecofeminist Perspective. *Environmental Politics, 4*(4), 134-168.

RMC Research Corporation, Denver, CO, May 2004. http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/quick_guides/civics_k-12/

Rose, R. et al (1998). *Democracy and Its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies:* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Rosenberg, G. (2004). "Substituting Symbol for Substance: What did Brown Really Accomplish?" *Political Science and Politics*, 37.

Sartre, J. P. (2001). *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. London: Routledge (UK).

Siani-Davies, P. (2005). *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Smith, S. R. & Ingram, H. (2002). "Rethinking Policy Analysis: Citizens, Community and the Restructuring of Public Service," The Good Society, 11, (1), 55-60.

Smolar, A. (2002). Poland's Eastern Policy and Membership in the European Union. *The EU's "Eastern Dimension"–An Opportunity for or Idée Fixe of Poland's Policy*, 10-14.

So, A. (1990). *Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency, and World-System Theories*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Library of Social Research.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*: Sage Publications Inc.

Stein, S. (2004). "The Culture of Education Policy." New York: Teachers College Press.

Stiglitz, J. E. (2003). *Globalization and Its Discontents*: WW Norton & Company.

Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Qin-Hilliard, D. (2004). *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium*: University of California Press.

Tibbitts, F. (2001). Prospects for Civics Education in Transitional Democracies: results of an impact study in Romanian classrooms. *Intercultural Education, 12*(1), 27-40.

Tismaneanu, V. (2003). *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Tucker, R. (1978). *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York, New York: WW Norton & Company.

Verdery, K. (1995). *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania:* University of California Press.

Verona, S. (1992). *Military Occupation and Diplomacy: Soviet Troops in Romania, 1944-1958*: Duke University Press.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*: Sage Publications Inc.

Zajda, J. et al. (2009). *Nation-building, identity and citizenship education: cross-cultural perspectives:* Springer.

Websites:

http://www.grist.org

http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html;

http://www.seventhgeneration.com

http://www.bbc.com

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/map/yugoslavia

http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/BASIC/Pros-descr.HTM

Constitution of Romania:
    http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act2_2&par1=2#t2c2s0a32

http://www.wam.umd.edu/~jtpurta/

http://europa.eu.int/abc/governments/index_en.htm

www.hyperion.ro

www.oecd.org

"Iraq's Known Unknowns, Still Unknown", Published: February 23, 2010. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/24/opinion/24friedman.html?pagewanted =print (2 of 3)2/24/2010 1:47:56 PM