

# STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF QUALITY AT THE LEVEL OF PRE-UNIVERSITY SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** *The study on the perception of quality at the level of pre-university lower secondary education institutions highlights the importance of establishing the essential elements in improving quality management in school organizations. The quantitative research was conducted on a sample of 100 teachers from secondary school units, both in rural and urban areas, in Dâmbovița County. The research combined both the face-to-face interview technique and the internet survey, using the questionnaire as a research tool. The obtained results highlight the aspects related to the present initiatives and the acquisitions previously acquired by the school organizations in the field of quality management, to obtain performance, through the vision of the teaching staff.*

**Keywords:** *quality, quality management, performance evaluation*

**JEL Code:** *I21,*

## 1. Introduction

In an increasingly dynamic and complex society, several new challenges for quality management developed and implemented in a school organization are being raised and fewer and fewer solutions are being offered. In this context, the innovation, training, and creativity of teachers become the chances to solve current problems or substantive dilemmas faced by improving the quality management in education.

## 2. Theoretical Approach

In the literature, the concept of quality has a wide range of definitions and explanations. In essence, quality is defined in several ways but is easily recognized by standards. It relates to the needs of the consumer. This involves setting standards concerning customer needs, constantly updating these standards. The concept of quality is also understood through competitiveness and the ability to excel. We focus on one of the definitions given to quality: quality is the ability of a set of intrinsic characteristics of a product, system, or process to meet the requirements of customers or other stakeholders (Enătescu, et al., 2000).

Quality is the basis of the positioning of organizations, institutions, attracting the degree of interest shown to them. Quality refers to the number or quantity of resources consumed to meet standards and meet requirements. Quality management in education is based on a set of activities of planning, control, and quality improvement. Recognizing the particularly key role of teachers in the development of the educational process has a much longer history than recognizing the role of the curriculum in the same aspect. People are considered a crucial resource, the most valuable asset for any type of organization, regardless of its field of activity (Maican, 2001).

From this perspective, the positive experiences, the essential concentrations of the Romanian school management system, and the contemporary trends are balanced. There is a permanent balance between the present initiatives and the previously acquired acquisitions, to achieve performance (Istrate, 2012).

## 3. Study on the Perception of Quality at the Level of Secondary Education Institutions

### 3.1. The Methodological Framework of the Research

The size of the sample: the sample consists of 100 teachers from secondary school units, both in rural and urban areas, in Dâmbovița County. For this research was used non-randomized sampling. The research was conducted through surveys and is quantitative, using face-to-face interview methods and using the internet, based on a questionnaire.

The questionnaire contains 5 main subjects, with 22 items, corresponding to the testing of the two working hypotheses. The questionnaire was built based on five-step semantic differential assessment scales and the Likert scale. Processing of the questionnaire was made in the database created in the Microsoft Excel software, where the Data Analysis Tools tool was applied.

Research objectives

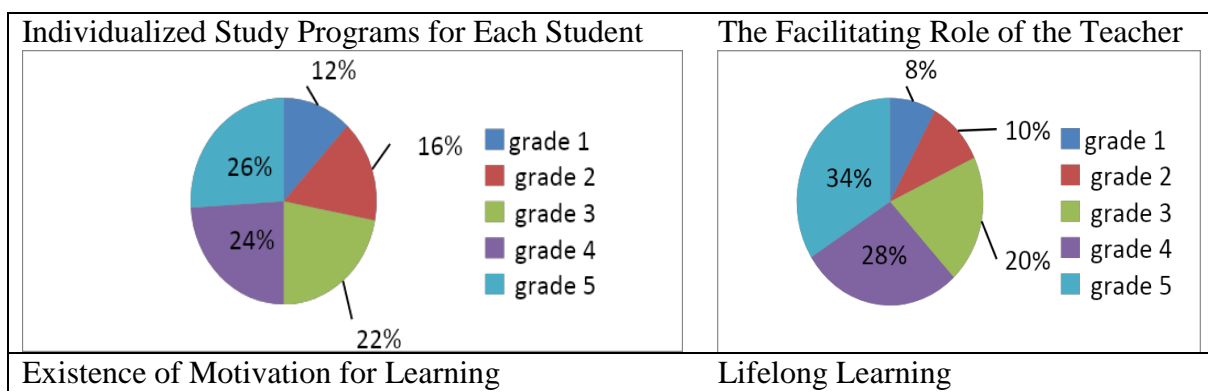
- Establishing the essential elements in improving quality management in school organizations.
- Identifying the perception on the training of the teaching staff and the connection with the improvement of the quality management.

Research hypotheses

- ✓ The professionalization of the management of school organizations determines the increase of the quality of education.
- ✓ The efficient training of the teaching staff directly influences the increase of the quality in the school organizations.

**3.2. The Results**

The analysis of the answers for each item leads to the achievement of the objectives of the research methodology. The item "Individualized study programs for each student" shows a high weight for the highest grades in the associated assessment scale, with 26% of respondents giving the maximum grade. Likewise for the item "Facilitating role of the teacher", the responding teachers consider the statement under their opinions in a majority of 34% giving the maximum grade, while the minimum grade is obtained in a percentage of only 8% of the total respondents. Regarding the item regarding the existence of motivation for learning, most respondents, respectively 42% consider this item important giving it the maximum grade, while grade 4 is given by 22% of respondents, grade 3 of 20% of respondents, grade 2 of 16% of the respondents and the minimum grade did not register any answer. For the lifelong learning item, teachers gave a grade of 5 in 28%, while the majority in 40% appreciated this item with a grade of 4, a grade of 3 was given by 12%, and grades 2 and 1 were appreciated by 18% and 2%, respectively. Regarding the appreciation of the element that constitutes the current approach of the quality concept for the future, namely the cultivation of local, national, and European values, the respondents give a grade of 5 in a proportion of 24%, grade 4 gets the most answers, in the percentage of 36%, in time what grade 3 is given by 20% of the respondents, grade 2 of 16% and the minimum grade of 4% of the teachers participating in this survey. (Figure 1)



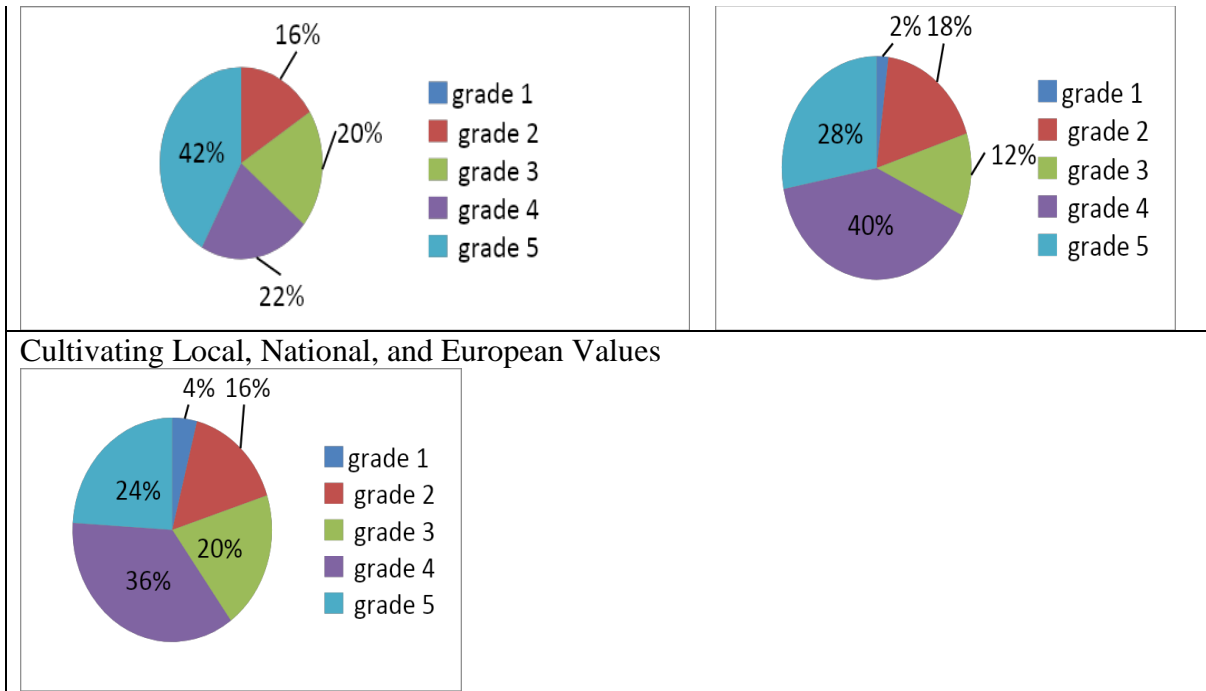


Figure 1: Appreciation of the Concept of Quality for the Future  
Source: Data Processed by the Author

Regarding the assessment of the mechanisms meant to ensure quality in education, in the item on efficient management, the majority of 50% of the respondents gave the maximum grade, followed by the rest of the answers divided between grade 4 and 3, respectively in the percentage of 34% and 16%. The efficient training of the teaching staff is following the preferences of the respondents, who give a maximum grade of 54%, followed by grade 4 in 32% and the remaining 14% of respondents appreciate this item with a grade of 3. Records no response for the lowest possible grades. Regarding the rethinking of the learning process, most respondents rate this option with the highest grade to ensure mechanisms for increasing quality in education, 44% of respondents consider this mechanism to be grade 4 by their assessments and 10% give grade 3. No answers for the lowest possible grades are recorded for this item either. (Figure 2)

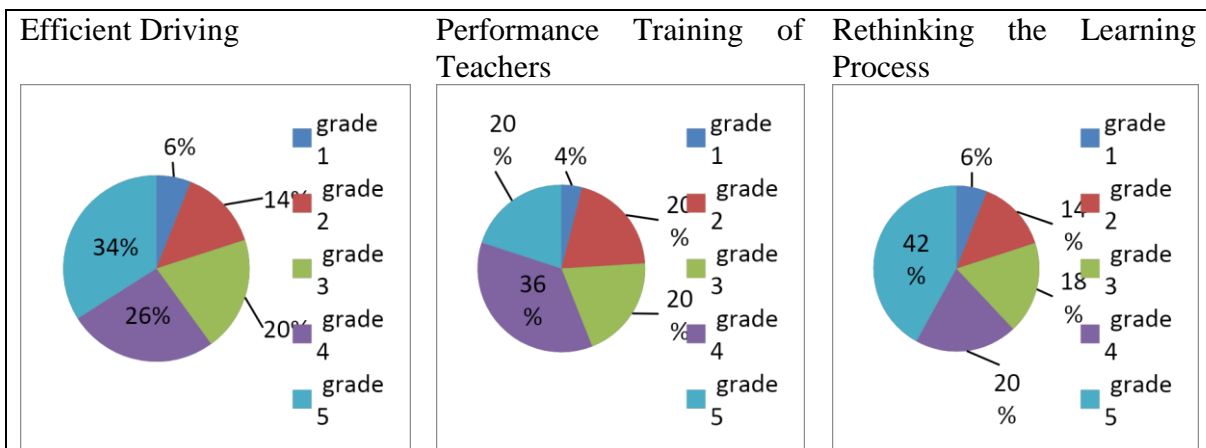


Figure 2: Appreciation of the Mechanisms Meant to Ensure Quality in Education.  
Source: Data Processed by the Author

Regarding the evaluation of the degree of importance that influences the performance in education, three items were addressed related to the attitude towards learning, the cultivation and observance of certain values, and the involvement in the act of education. Most respondents, 34%, gave grade 5 to learning attitudes, while 26% gave grade 4, grade 3 was given by 20% of respondents, and grades 2 and 1 were given by 14%, respectively. 6% of teachers participated in the survey. Cultivation and observance of certain values are appreciated by most respondents with a grade of 4, while the maximum grade was given by a lower percentage, respectively 20%, the same percentage of respondents gave grades 3 and 2, and grade 1 was given by 4% of respondents. The involvement in the educational activity is considered by most of the respondents as being of grade 5, grade 4 is assigned in a proportion of 20% and the percentage decreases significantly for the lowest grades up to 6% for the minimum grade. (Figure 3)

Regarding the extent to which the respondents consider that the quality is achieved, three items were considered regarding cultivating well-being in school, digitization of the didactic act and the curriculum adapted to the specifics of the school, the place, and the student. The obtained results highlight the continuous preoccupation towards the improvement of the instructive-educational process for the benefit of the students and the society. The cultivation of well-being is appreciated with a grade of 4 in a proportion of 32%, a similar percentage of 30% gives the item the maximum grade, while grade 3 is assigned by a percentage of 18%, grade 2 by a percentage of 16% and the grade minimum of only 4%.

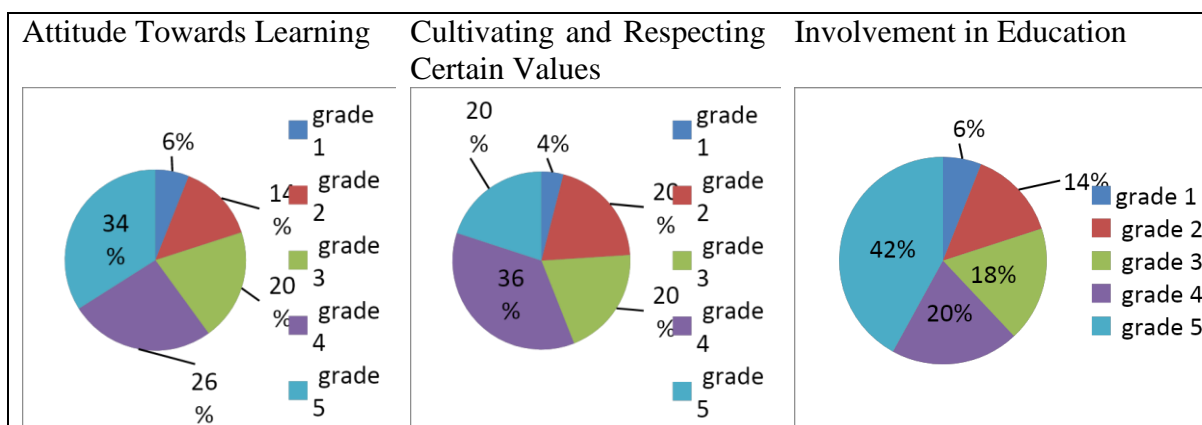


Figure 3: The Factors that Influence Performance in Education.  
Source: Data Processed by the Author

Regarding the item digitization of the didactic act, the majority percentage of 34% gives grade 4, the maximum grade being given by a percentage lower than only 20%, grade 3 registers a percentage of 24% of the total answers, while grades 2 and 1 are granted by 14% and 8% respectively. The curriculum adapted to the specifics of the school, the place, and the student is appreciated with the maximum grade in the majority of 32% of the total respondents, a similar percentage of 30% assigns grade 4, grade 3 is conferred by 20%, while grades 2 and 1 are assigned by a percentage of 14%, respectively 4% of the total pre-university teachers participating in the survey. (Figure 4)

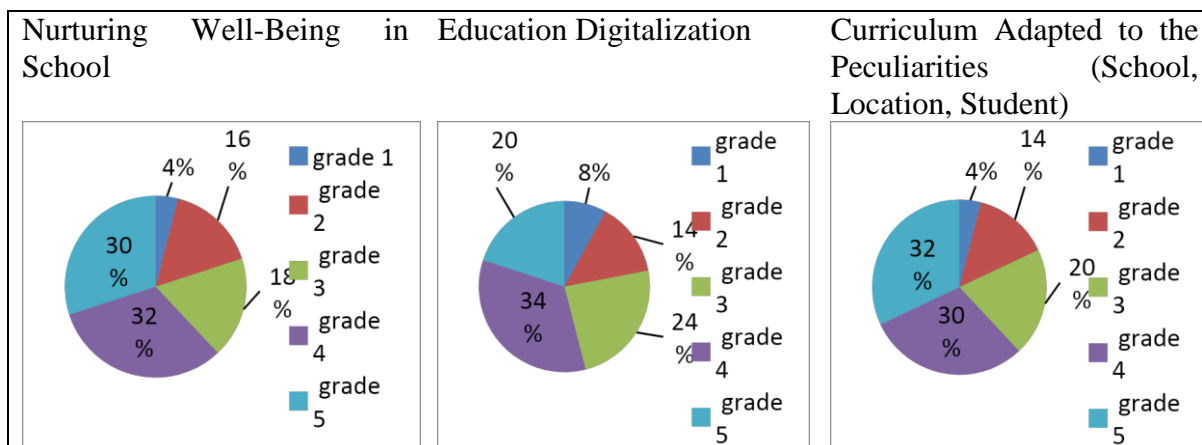


Figure 4: Increasing the Education Quality  
Source: Data Processed by the Author

Regarding the validation of the first hypothesis, correlation tests were applied to define the interdependence or link between the observed variables. The value recorded by the correlation coefficient, 0.846, shows a direct and positive correlation, the histogram of the answers shows an asymmetric distribution. The hypothesis is confirmed. (Figure 5)

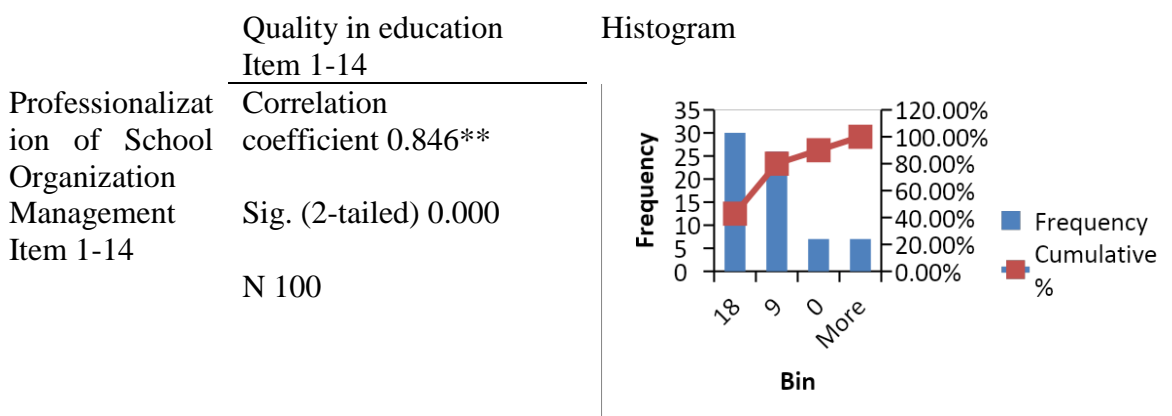


Figure 5: Descriptive Statistics  
Source: Data Processed by the Author

Regarding the improvement of the quality management at the level of the gymnasium school units through the prism of the improvement of the teaching staff, a series of eight statements were defined, on which the respondents were asked to express their total agreement, agreement, disagreement, total disagreement, or indifference. Depending on the number of answers and their weighting with the coefficients corresponding to the scale, each of the eight statements obtained a score, which shows the degree of appreciation of respondents according to the importance of the statement on improving quality management in secondary schools. (Figure 6)

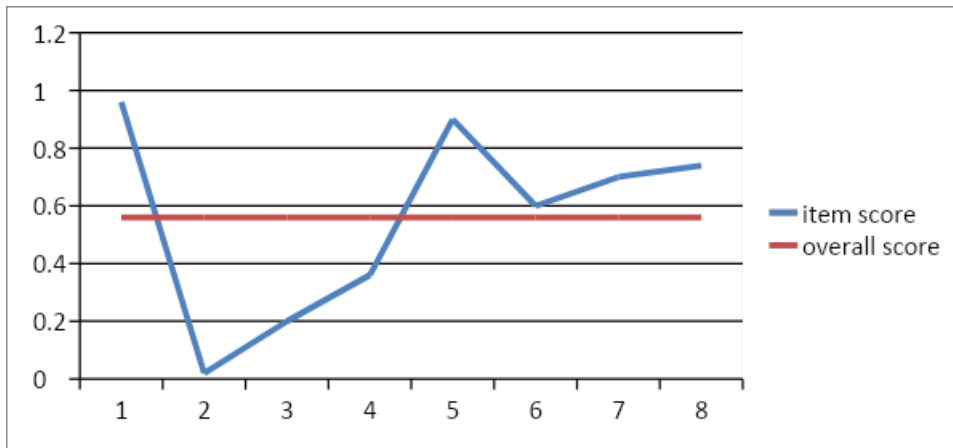


Figure 6: Item Scores

Source: Data Processed by the Author

The statements obtained the following scores:

- the need for the manager's position as an educational leader, score 0.96
- reaching the level of educational expert, score 0.02
- the need for a new method of teacher evaluation, score 0.2
- the need for multidisciplinary training of teachers to develop a vision of the profession, score 0.36
- mobility of the profession (between the level of studies, at international level), score 0.9
- training of non-teaching staff that must be correlated with the needs of the organization, score 0.6
- training students according to the European profile of the graduate, score 0.7
- the need to develop school-parent partnerships, score 0.74

The analysis of the scores obtained for each statement, concerning the total score, validates the second hypothesis of the study, namely the efficient training of teachers directly influences the increase in quality in school organizations.

#### 4. Conclusions

Quality management at the level of gymnasium school units implies a systemic, innovative, situational approach of school organizations that offer training services. In this sense, the school organization must develop its capacity for continuous adaptation to the external environment, by implementing flexible strategic processes. Practicing quality management, applied scientifically and not intuitively, based on strategies designed following the objective diagnosis of the school, with the optimization of material resources, with more motivated and better prepared human resources, and especially with realistic evaluation procedures, represents a successful approach in middle school and beyond. Concerning teachers, the confirmation of the hypothesis that the efficient training of teachers directly influences the increase in quality in school organizations shows that only those who want to study, adapt and change will be able to keep pace, control, and can fulfill teaching tasks, thus meeting the needs of the current generation.

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