

THE ROLE OF SWOT ANALYSIS IN THE PROJECTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL OFFERS REGARDING PRE-UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS

Mihaela MAŞCU

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania
Mihaelauda@yahoo.com

Abstract

Ensuring the educational services quality represents a safe path to competitiveness and raising the quality of living. The initial and continuous improvements are fundamental actions for the existence and development of human beings. For this purpose, modern society must permanently emphasize the role of quality education regarding the enhancement of life. Awareness, compliance and the support through particular actions lead to improvement, which is a significant objective for all of the factors involved in the educational system. For that reason, the endorsement and implementation of modern systems meant to control quality are imperative to meet the requirements of the European Union. The accent must be put on strengthening all of the factors involved in the educational process, for the purpose of learning and putting to the test the principles, techniques and quality management methods. Under these conditions, the quality of educational services is a decisional factor for competitiveness and for the standard of living. To put together an educational offer, that meets the interests of the direct and indirect receivers, the educational institution is using SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis is not only an analysis tool but it is also a tool for planning future actions of the institution. Through this analysis we can identify the main strong and poor spots of the institution, along with threats and external opportunities.

Keywords: Quality ensuring, Educational offer, SWOT analysis, Pre-university education.

1.INTRODUCTION

Regarding pre-university education, quality sums all of the features of the educational act, articulating the influences and actions that took place in the formal and informal environment. The main role of educational institutions, in a society that is constantly changing, is to educate the peers so that they are capable of overcoming situations of personal, social and economic nature. Talapazan V. (2006, p55) mentions that assuring educational quality requires not only systems but also auto-evaluation complementary procedures.

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Education quality is a necessity experienced by all the factors involved (students, teachers, parents, traders, community). Rădulescu and Tîrcă consider that the partnership regarding the education field must be promoted not only on a society scale but also on all communities scale.

Therefore, for the students, quality education can mean: Dynamic adaptation on the labor market due to the skills obtained, capability to select and access the desired school and fully integration in the knowledge society. For the parents, quality education means: the guarantee that the chosen school can make the children improve, develop harmonious, and it also means that the education must offer clear perspectives for the child's future. More than that, the parents believe that a school is complex and whole when they don't need to find other forms of additional guidance for their children. The need of quality in education is also experienced by teachers regarding the consolidation of the social and professional status, rewarding systems, positive image between the students and parents. Scholar institutions, as a provider of educational services, imposes the need of quality in education to consolidate a prestige on a local, regional, national and international scale, to rationalize activities regarding student financing as a result of decentralization, to highly recognize the offered qualifications and to restore the trust in the Romanian school system.

The existence of quality education in the Romanian schools displays a series of advantages for every direct and indirect beneficiaries of the educational act. The need of quality in the Romanian school system has determined the making of some efforts to assure the necessary levers needed to obtain a quality educational system which meets the requirements of all society members.

This way, for students, the advantages can be: an educational process focused on the student, equal chances, higher probability to fill a job, accountability regarding own personal and professional evolution, educational services revised to fit student's competence, active involvement in the auto evaluation process based on a learning program well built. For the educational institution, advantages can materialize as: autonomy growth, supporting an organizational culture, recognition in the community, increasing the level of fulfilment for the beneficiaries of education, the possibility of an optimal collaboration with other educational institutions of the same type and casual informing of good practices and successful experiences.

Also, for the employers, as indirect partakers in the educational act, ensuring quality generates the following advantages: permanent adjustment regarding the formation labour market offers, strengthening the role of the school regarding the appropriation of the skills on school period. For

society, these benefits can be: recognizing the school's role as the main influence of education's quality, the access to scholar information, taken in consideration that it is a public institution, raising the implication role of the school in the life of the community. Basically, quality means simply answering the requests (Ciurea S, 1999, p.56).

To harmonize the interests of all the factors involved in the educational act and to assure a qualitative educational offer, the school uses SWOT analysis.

The SWOT analysis is not only an analysis tool but it is also a tool for planning future actions of the institution. Through this analysis we can identify the main strong and poor spots of the institution, along with threats and external opportunities.

2.THE REVISION OF LITERATURE

In the wake of education's development, especially teaching, slowly there appeared numerous schools, but with different levels, grades, profiles and forms, arising this way the teaching system of a country. The role of the education system is to assure the training of the youth, of the workforce and of the professionals. Just like the great philosopher Kant mentioned, education can be considered "one of the greatest and hardest problem that has been given to men for solving". Romanian educational system is organized following the Law of National Education nr. 1 from 2011 and it is controlled by the Ministry of National Education. No matter the level of schooling, every structure has its own form of organization representing the subject of the acting legislation. The Romanian educational system is divided in two main areas, each has its own sub-areas, as it can be seen from the following chart (Figure 1).

Therefore, higher education is organised in higher education institutions or accredited universities or institutions that function based on a provisional authorization which offers programs that respects the principle of quality and the correlation of the educational offers regarding the labor market. The mission of higher education institutions is to provide and transfer knowledge to society through Bachelor's degrees, masters, doctoral studies and postgraduate studies.

In its turn, pre-university education is an integral part of the national education system, mobilising in its structure, not just state and private educational institute but also confessional.

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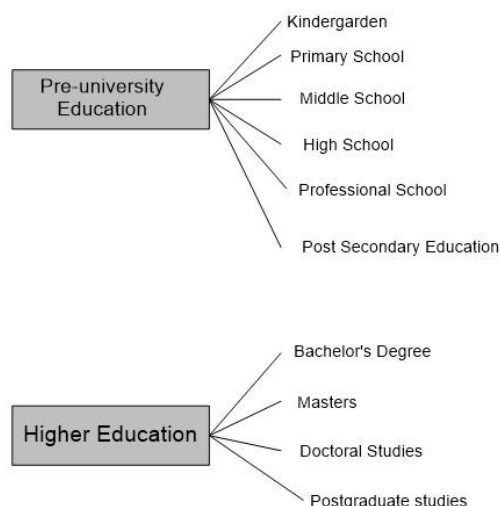


FIGURE 1 PORTRAYING THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Source: the author (adaptation after N.L.E)

In Romania, pre-university educational system is as follows:

- 1) Kinder garden which includes: small group, medium group, big group and the preparation for school group
- 2) Primary school, grades I-IV;
- 3) Middle school, with the following structures:
 - a. Secondary inferior, including grades V-VIII, vocational schools, and also grades IX-X;
 - b. Secondary superior, including X-XII/XIII grades;
- 4) Professional School.

At the level of the Ministry of National Education, pre-university education is controlled and revised by the General Direction of Early Education, School, Performances and Programs.

The main objection of Romanian pre-university system is assuring the development of society based on knowledge. Furthermore, Nedelcu, A., Palade, E., Iosifescu, (2009, p.28), mentions that „the purpose of schools is to provide the students a high quality learning experience”. Regarding this, the romanian state provides access and legal rights to all romanian citizens, for all the levels and forms of pre-university education, no matter the social and economical status, gender, race, political appartenance, etc. The role of the learning process that take place in schools is to „prepare the student for what it is about to do” (Popovici, D.2000, p.121).

The leading characteristics of the Romanian pre-university education system are:

- Gratuitousness (the Romanian state provides free access to all forms of pre-university education)
- Funding (the Romanian state provides educational funding with a minimum of 6% from the gross domestic product)
- Open Character (provides the students the opportunity to pass, respecting the regulations of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, from an institution to another, from a domain to another from a pathway to another);
- Public access.

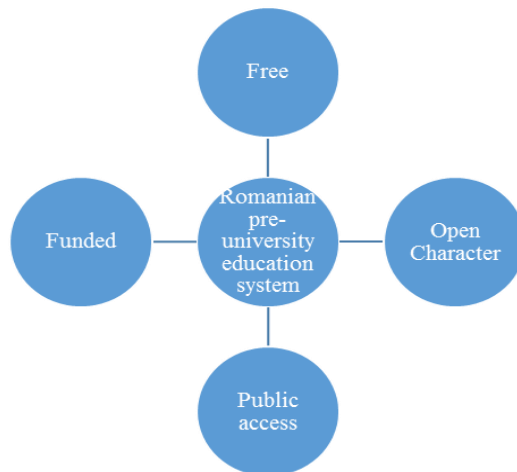


FIGURE 2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ROMANIAN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SYSTEM

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology is based on the analysis of literature regarding a diagnosis tool of the school and of the educational environment in which it function, correspondingly SWOT analysis. In the wake of the unfolding and completion of the SWOT analysis, a set of priorities with related objectives has been set.

Research Objectives:

- O1: identifying the potential of school in correlation with the educational offer;
- O2: completing a SWOT analysis for a pre-university educational institution;

O3: establishing the sets of priorities and objectives related to the following school year.

4. TECHNIQUES AND RESEARCH TOOLS

Regarding the fulfilment of the research, there have been used quantitative and qualitative methods. For the qualitative research, documents have been accessed (internal assessment reports, auto evaluation process reports, improvement plans), and for the quantitative research, the financial situations of the school have been accessed. The results led to the elaboration of the priorities and objective set, which can grant the continuous improvement of the educational plan's quality in schools, through the involvement of all the factors concerned.

5. SWOT ANALYSIS ON THE LEVEL OF PRE-UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS

The educational institution for which the SWOT analysis was realised has the following characteristics: urban environment functioning, grants training for the professional pathway: services oriented, educational levels, professional domains and qualification levels: economic and administrative activities technician, trade activities technician, tourism and gastronomy activities technician. The analysis took place for the 2015-2016 school year, being based on the next statistical data:

Students total:

- Secondary inferior education: grade IX: 8 classes/ 230 students, grade X: 7 classes/ 220 students,
- Secondary superior education: grade XI: 7 classes/ 185 students, grade XII: 8 classes/ 206 students,
- 3 years professional school: grade IX: 1 class/ 14 students, grade X: 1 class/ 21 students, grade XI: 1 class/ 11 students.

TABLE 1. STUDENT DIVISION, TECHNOLOGICAL DOMAIN BY QUALIFICATIONS AND GRADES

Pathway	Profile	Qualification	IX		X		XI		XII		TOTAL	
			(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	Nr clase	Total elevi
Everyday technological education	services	Economical activities technician	3	86	3	91	2	57	2	58	10	292

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Everyday technological education	services	Administrative activities technician	-	-	-	-	1	29	1	27	2	56
Everyday technological education	services	Tourism activities technician	1	30	1	24	-	-	-	-	2	54
Everyday technological education	services	Tourism activities technician bilingual	1	28	1	23	1	20	1	22	4	93
Everyday technological education	services	Trading activities technician	2	56	2	57	1	25	2	47	8	185
Everyday technological education	services	Gastronomy technician	1	30	1	25	2	55	2	52	6	162
TOTAL			8	230	7	220	7	185	8	206	31	842

(1) Classes Number; (2) Students Number

TABLE 2. THREE YEARS PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL, 3 CLASSES – 63 STUDENTS

Profile	Domain	Professional qualification	IX		X		XI	
			Nr. clase	Nr. elevi	Nr. Clase	Nr. elevi	Nr. Clase	Nr. elevi
Technological High School, Services profile	Gastronomy	Chef	1	14				
	Gastronomy	Chef			1	21	-	-
	Trading	Sales person	-	-	-	-	1	11

Source: R.A.E.I. Commercial College Carol I, Constanța

Teaching staff

Total number of teaching staff: 68, from which: 54 professors; 7 substitutes și 7 paid by the hour.

- Total number of teachers hired (for every discipline)
- The number of qualified teachers
- The number of teachers that are from another locality (commuters)
- The number of new teachers arrived
- The number of contributors/retirees

68	100%
68	100%
5	7.35%
8	11.76%
7	10.29%

Covering the teaching loads with teaching staff hired the previous year:

- Total number of teachers hired (for every discipline)

62.43

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2. The number of teachers with basic norm in the institution	55
3. The number of teachers paid by the hour	6
4. The number of contributors, paid by the hour	1

Details regarding financial resources:

Activity funding is accomplished from the following resources: local budget, state budget, extra budgetary sources that are coming from: partnerships, sponsorships and donations, ongoing courses (ECDL), other sources.

TABLE 3. DETAILS REGARDING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

		31.10.2015	31.12.2015	31.08.2016	31.08.2016
Budgetary incomes	Local	398208	961570	3974192	2407088
	Stat	31482	90478	203103	100640
Extra budgetary incomes		3980	11408	54949	88627
Non refundable funding from external sources					70050
Total		433670	1063456	2562677	4335972

The percentage of promotion regarding the Bacalaureate exam is 87,97%, the percentage of promotion regarding the professional skill certification is 100%, and 185 graduates have oriented to higher education. Only 3% of the graduates have been integrated in the labor market.

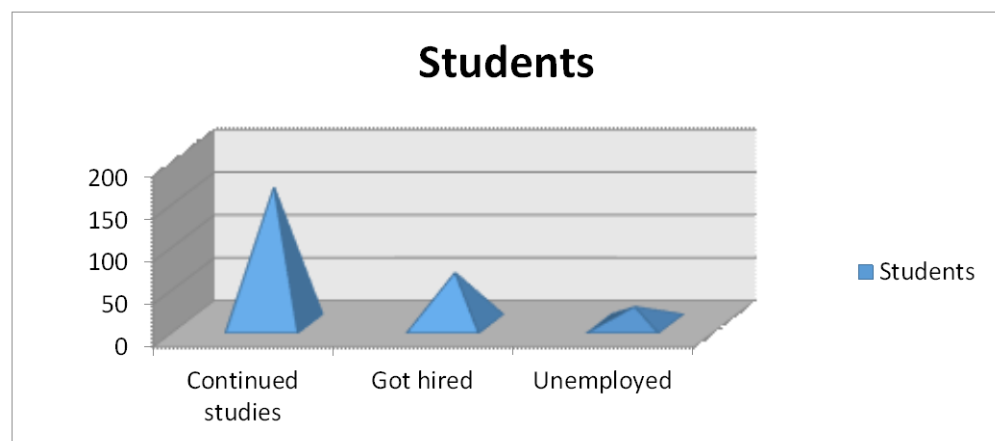


FIGURE 3. GRADUATE MONITORING 2016 (PROCESSED AFTER THE STATISTICAL SITUATION FROM COMMERCIAL COLLEGE CAROL I, CONSTANTA)

5.1. Exercise regarding SWOT analysis at pre-university education level, technological pathway, services

I. Strong spots

Curriculum

- High moral authority of the institution on a local scale;
- Educational offer permanently adapted to the labor's market requests;
- Optional discipline diversity;
- Attractive local development curriculum established jointly with the economical partners;
- Maximum accomplishing percent of the school plan;
- High promovability coeficient regarding the certification and national exams;
- Implementation of modern teaching-learning-evaluation methods and shaping the teachers to concentrate on the student;
- The experience of the teachers regarding the speciality, counseling si professional orientation, educational management;
- Dinamic and resilient managerial team;
- The managerial team particularly focuses on quality education, institution's respectable results obtained at contests, olympics and other manifestations.

Human Resources (H.R.)

- Posivite evolution of the teaching positions occuppied by professors;
- Decreased number of norms regarding the hourly pay;
- High qualification of the teachers through teaching degrees II, I, masters and PhD;
- Permanent improvement of the teachers through involvement in shaping courses conducted at a local, national and european scales, methodical activities at school and county scale;
- Highly moral and professional look of the teachers;

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- Teachers are members of several branches of I.S./M.E.N. They are involved actively and dinamically in the evolution of the educationa process;
- High promovability at the National Baccalaureate Exam, students involved and praised at scholar contests and olympics;
- The presence of a solid databased that contains informations regarding the population in schools, norming, staff movements, national exams, accounting documents and statistical situations, etc;
- High percent of graduates that continues to high-education studies;
- Involving the students in the organization and functioning of clubs on different fields.

Financial and material

- Mantaining superior hygenic and sanitary conditions;
- The presence of offices and laboratories: specialized, general knowlegde, computer science equipped accordingly;
- The presence of psycho-pedagogical office and school's medical office;
- Permanent adjustment of the book collection in the library;
- Acces at modern multimedia resources and internet connection;
- The presence of the court and gym equipped with specific equipment;
- Transparency and efficient use of extra budgetary resources for the improvement of the material base.

Relationship with the community

- Involvement in display that impacts on the community: fairs, festivals, exhibitions;
- Closing training contracts with economical agents to ensure that the students will be properly trained;
- Institutional support from the parents through Parent's Association;
- The existence of partnerships closed with local's community institutions, organizations.

II. Weak spots

Curriculum

- Overloading the educational plan, which doesn't allow the existence of additional activities as well as overlapping of the thematic content of specialized modules;
- The insufficient use of the AEL program;
- The lack of books for specialized disciplines;
- Partial accomplishment regarding the monitoring and permanent evaluation of scholar performance;
- Insufficient diversification of the evaluation strategies and interchange of the evaluation methods and traditional techniques with the modern ones by some of the teachers;
- Insufficient using for continuous educational quality improvement of the feedback provided by the students and the concerned factors;
- Insufficient involvement of the students not only in assuming own teaching process, but also in the evaluating the progress.

Human Resources (H.R.)

- The lack of a special space dedicated to staff meetings;
- The record of a high average age of all personnel;
- The lack of cleaning staff;
- The unwillingness to change of the human factor involved in the process of educational reform;
- Involving the same personnel in numerous activities;
- Raising the number of students that are raised by single parents or with parents gone abroad;
- The absence of learning motivation for some of the students is reflected in low grades;
- Failure in popularizing the appreciation criteria among the students and parents;
- Almost no implication of the parents in the projection, accomplishment and conduct of scholar and extra scholar activities;

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-Growth rate of absenteeism because of commuters students or students that come from families with modest budget;

-Not granting in time the financial aid for the students.

Financial and Material

-The lack of funding necessary for procurement programs;

-The lack of funds for investing;

Relationship with the community

-Insufficient involvement and accountability on the part of economical partners regarding the training of students;

-Insufficient financial support on the part of the local community to conduct scholar projects.

III. Opportunities**Curriculum**

-Involving the personnel in the planning of several events with various thematic;

-Develop and promote partnerships with local institutions;

-The possibility of shaping and perfecting the entire personnel from the institution;

-High involvement rate of the parents regarding the development of scholar and extra scholar activities;

-Involving as partners/contributors in several European projects to obtain the necessary funds to endow scholar institutions

-Creating an informational cell for students with the support of the Student's Association within the school;

-The existence of informational/learning platforms regarding active and participative, learning and evaluation strategies;

-The possibility to authorize the institution in training areas in conformity with the requirements from the labor market, assuring this way a smooth professional insertion of the graduates;

-Prioritizing the service domain at a local and regional scale.

Human Resource (H.R)

-Diversified offer of forming courses organized by the authorized agencies;

-Financial support from la Local Council regarding the reimbursement of transport expenses supported by teachers and students.

Financial and Material Resources

-The presence of technological equipment and the implementation of modern evaluation, communication and information tools;

-Involving the Parent's Association in accomplishing the extra-curricular activities of the institution.

Relationships with the community

-The existence of local, national and European educational partnerships and efficient collaborations with public institutions, economical agents, social partners;

-The variety of professional training of the students, within the pale of professional education, technological high school, in qualifications required on the labor market, at a local, national and international scale;

-Initiatives from the local community's institutions and from economical agents to conduct partnerships and educational programs;

-Involvement in European projects and from structural funds;

-The unfolding of fairs to promote the educational offer at a county and national scale;

-Diversification at a local scale of economic activities in the services field;

IV. Threats

Curriculum

-Frequent interventions at legislation level regarding the teaching plans and school programs;

-Applying different criteria regarding the performance definition at high school level;

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- Attracting the teachers to prestigious educational institutions;
- Possibility to encounter violent acts or situations involving banned substances in the institution;
- Poor planning of the school program.

Human Resources

- Large fluctuation of the personnel during school years;
- Unappealing paying system for all teachers;
- Incapability of the institution to select and hire own personnel;
- Decrease of the school population;
- Obstacles in appealing the students to professional education, respectively the misconceptions of the parents and students towards this education form;
- Reduced motivational system for the human resource;
- Occurrence of the risk of failure for students, as a consequence of family's migration to other countries;
- Poor communication between parents-students-teachers;

Material and Financial

- Underfunding the pre-university institutions;
- Influence of the external factors that causes absenteeism and dropping school situations;
- Poor involvement of the parents in the school life of the student;
- Poor financial situation of some families;
- Migration of the personnel to better paying fields.

Relations with the community

- Permanent change of the absorption possibilities of graduates on the local market;
- Existence of limited material and financial resources of the local communities;
- The absence of legislative regulations that require the interest of the local communities;

-Restriction the activities of some firms, having direct consequences on including young graduates between employees.

5.2. Priorities at educational institutions scale and approaching the best practices to fulfill them

Taking in account the SWOT analysis presented, we can highlight the following priorities:

-The correlation of institution's educational offers with the qualification requirements on the labor market.

An efficient example with real results is represented by the dual German education model from the Baden-Württemberg land. It is estimated that this model, through efficient integration of the graduate in the labor market, represents a successful educational offer, an alternative to the VET professional education from Europe. The attribute of "dual education" comes from the way the responsibility is divided, respectively between firm and school. It is to mention that access is granted for all of the categories, no matter the age and the level of studies finalized at the moment of registration (secondary superior or university). The economical agent represents, along the school, an essential partner in the student's shaping. This model supports and favors the student. Approaching the German dual education can lead to a favorable change in the Romanian professional education, regarding the correlation of the education offer with the demand for labor.

-Improving the learning condition in the educational institution:

Through the approach of the German dual education model, firms, as social partners, can initiate and extend scholar partnerships. This way, they support quality education assurance in school, and they get involved in equipping the offices and school laboratories. In the wake of a study made by UNICEF, it is revealed that the allocation of 6% of the PIB to the educational budget, as the Law of national education nr 1/2011 requires, is a viable solution for economic growth with 2,7-2,95% for the 2015-2025 period.

-Developing the school's human resources

A representative way for the organizational model is given by the French system. This is characterized by active involvement of the state in the organization and funding education. At a national level, all aspects concerning the curriculum, the selection and hiring personnel, professional forming, funding the educational system, are regulated, and the local authorities are responsible with the material support,

infrastructure and scholar transport. To assure the initial shaping process, followed by professional developing during the whole career, education institutions need strategies followed by resources. Personnel policies must be directed not only to recruiting but also to high quality staff fidelity.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The major objective of education is to provide the student the knowledge and skills necessary to live a quality life, to shape them in responsible citizens, capable to contribute and support economic growth. Therefore, modernizing the material base within the pre-university institution, assures a smooth access to educational resources. To assure the quality of the educational act on every levels, interventions are necessary in both school's management and also at the level of methods and tools of learning. Furthermore, rising the amounts assigned for financing the educational system can lead to real investment in education. At the scale of Romanian pre-university education system, a series of actions are necessary, designed to transform it in a real, smooth and competitive one, in both European level and also worldwide.

Just as Alvin Toffler said, in the XXI century, an illiterate is not the one who isn't capable of writing and reading, an illiterate is the one who can't learn permanently. The knowledge society asserts this necessity that makes its presence felt at the educational institution scale. Therefore, the involvement in forming and continuous development activities can lead to high professional competitiveness. However, it is important that the acquisitions must be permanently applied in the educational process and must be reflected in the direct beneficiary's skills. The performance of a school can be described from the view of students that accomplished skill to differentiate them on the educational market and to allow a successful integration on the labor market. The interconnecting of the educational system with the communities and student's needs will lead to a satisfying educational offer for the beneficiaries. Moreover, to assure, control and monitor quality, it is required a coherence regarding the adopted policies for the elaboration of the scholar curriculum, for the teaching processes, learning and evaluation that is accordingly to the specified standards. Controlling and monitoring the quality at high standards can be obtained by assuring the steadiness and the continuation of the educational policies according to the approved standards. A periodical revision of the policies is necessary to eradicate the constant errors.

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