

The SWOT Analysis of Pre-university Education

Vitan Daniela

,,1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia

daniela_v89@yahoo.com

Abstract

The information provided by the accounting tools is the database for assessing the performance of pre-university education institutions and identifying the solutions for improving it. They also allow a way to highlight how resources are handled, but also provide data needed to analyze the activity of pre-university education institutions.

In order to determine the performance and the quality of the activity carried out by a pre-university education institution it starts from identifying strengths and weaknesses, threats and capitalizing on opportunities. This is possible by using the SWOT analysis.

Key words: performance, analysis SWOT, quality

J.E.L. Classification: M49

1. Introduction

Lately, there is a growing need to modernize pre-university education in order to be more performing, to respond to challenges in the field, and cope with changes due to globalization.

Performance is the leverage required to achieve the objectives, but also a motivating factor to be better in competitions.

Currently, the major objective of the pre-university education process through modernization is closely linked to the concept of quality wherefore the level of international space is desired to be approached.

In order to analyze the performance of the pre-university education institutions and implicitly their quality and the way of managing resources, analyses, indicators, tools are used.

Thus, an important tool in the appreciation of pre-university education institutions is the SWOT analysis that identifies the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats in pre-university education institutions.

2. Research Methodology

Methodology, as a research system, is the one that teaches us to use methods, according to the rigors of a methodology appropriate to the subject of research (Ristea, 2009, p. 33).

The scientific knowledge of social facts, phenomena and processes is accomplished with the help of clearly defined concepts, using rigorous research methods and techniques, verifying hypotheses or following the objective description of social life (Chelcea, 2007, p. 48).

It plays an important role in all institutions, including those of pre-university education, as well as in society.

In order to perform a research in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, we need to acquire new knowledge in the field chosen for research.

Thus, we opted to address issues related to the performance of pre-university education having in mind the quality criteria and using the SWOT analysis as a tool.

In order to accomplish the work, we used techniques and procedures such as: studying bibliographic references, collecting and processing information as well as factual documentation in the pre-university education institutions.

3. Information referring the SWOT analysis

Every entity aims to link organizational efforts to achieving professional excellence.

Organizational performance reflects the ability to progress on the basis of constant efforts or the extent to which an employee performs his tasks, his contribution to the achievement of the entity's objectives.

Performance can be achieved by combining three factors: effort, ability and perception. The effort is based on motivation.

Organizational performance depends on several factors: organization environment, strategy and its mission, adaptability and flexibility.

Performance is a set of logical steps of an action from intent to the final result.

The concept of performance refers to the outstanding results achieved in a specific field or a certain activity. It also targets how the objectives are achieved or exceeded.

B. Colasse sees performance as being expressed through concepts such as growth, earning capacity, profitability, productivity, efficiency, competitiveness (Colasse, 2008, p. 23).

Performance means competitiveness, action, effort, success (Drăgușin, 2016, p. 239). Reported to the individual, performance is what the individual leaves behind and which exists beyond the intended purpose (Armstrong, 2014, p. 3).

Another meaning of the word performance is a balance between efficiency and effectiveness, respectively, between an entity's internal and external environment.

Efficiency means achieving a result with minimal consumption of resources or means.

Effectiveness aims at achieving the objectives or results that have been proposed or planned.

From an economic point of view, performance implies creating a value in the organization and it is given by the ratio between the cost and the value of the benefits that were obtained.

It is given by the interdependence of internal and external parameters, quantitative and qualitative, technical, human, financial.

Some authors believe that performance requires accomplishing some conditions: dynamic planning, quality achievement, teamwork, use of technology, skills improvement, management of change.

Although the legislation and the methodologies to ensure the quality of Romanian education are developed in accordance with European and world trends in the field, Romanian school institutions are far from structuring a specific culture (Cucos, 2009, p. 87).

Essential aspects of performance and quality in the pre-university education institutions can also be followed by a SWOT analysis.

SWOT analysis is a method used for gaining an overview of an institution by assessing internal and external factors that affect the institution and that allow highlighting its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the opportunities and the threats existing in the institutional environment.

This concept comes from English and it was introduced in the 1960s - 1970s in the U.S.

The strengths and the weaknesses are based on elements existing in the entity over a period of time while opportunities and threats relate to what an institution will be in the future by choosing one direction or another.

The strengths of an institution relate to the skills and the competences of the employees, the financial resources and the characteristics of the institution.

The weaknesses take into account the disadvantages or the deficiencies of the institutions and it concerns the field of research, the weak possibilities for development. Also, the weaknesses may be represented by the lack of financial resources needed for the development of the institution.

The opportunities of an institution relate to the environment and the conditions under which it operates while the opportunities are closely linked to the institution's external environment, and may even be related to the continued development of technology as well as to the legislative changes or other changes. Both weaknesses and opportunities can be controlled but threats cannot be intercepted.

The SWOT analysis has several advantages, but it also has some limits.

The advantages of SWOT analysis are: they contribute to capitalizing opportunities, building strengths, helping strategic planning through the information provided, helping to eliminate threats and capitalizing opportunities as well as identifying skills.

Thus, through a SWOT analysis an institution can relate resources and capabilities to the environment in which it operates.

Limits: The SWOT analysis may be subjective due to the degree of uncertainty in the institutional environment. Research and development, legislation also forms the limits of the SWOT analysis.

The SWOT analysis of educational institutions involves studying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of these institutions.

Thus, the first step of the analysis is represented by the quality and weaknesses of pre-university education followed by the analysis of opportunities. The last step is to identify factors that have a negative influence on pre-university education.

This analysis must be based on internal realities as well as on the environment, ie on data collected from persons involved in pre-university education or on data provided by reports and analyzes of experts.

The purpose of making a SWOT analysis of pre-university education is to identify the positive and the negative factors (making an objective analysis).

The SWOT analysis allows the identification of system threats and taking some regulatory measures, but also the possibility of improving the measures aimed at reforming the educational act.

The strengths represent the attributes of pre-university education institutions to achieve the objectives. They refer to the advantages of the Romanian educational system in comparison with other systems, the identification of human and material resources, the management of the educational system, the evaluation of the performance. The performance is assessed from the perspective of the accreditations, of exams and human resources involved in the educational act. Also, another aspect analyzed is given by teacher formation (initial and continuing).

The weaknesses are the elements that block the achievement of objectives and refer to the disadvantages of the Romanian education system in comparison with the European ones, the lack of material and human resources. At this stage, it is checked whether the management is efficient, if the performance criterion for teacher education as well as the level of innovation of pre-university education.

The comparison between the Romanian and the European system takes into account aspects related to the curriculum, the scientific research, the legislation and other aspects related to the educational system.

The opportunities relate to the conditions in the external environment of the education system needed to achieve the objectives.

These conditions relate to the possibilities of developing pre-university education, the possibilities of the system to benefit from an adequate legislation or aspects regarding the tendencies at an European level that are beneficial to the Romanian pre-university education.

The threats are all external conditions that may affect the achievement of objectives and relate to the negative impact of political and legislative effects on the pre-university education system as well as to the insufficiency or lack of funding sources.

Once these four aspects have been identified, the educational institutions make correlations between the strengths and the opportunities and the threats but also between threats, opportunities and weaknesses in order to solve the identified problems and achieve the education system strategy.

4. Applying the SWOT analysis in the pre-university education institutions

We will present an analysis model of the pre-university education system based on the human resources and the legislative context.

The strengths: involvement of local communities in school administration, programs to prevent illiteracy and school drop-out, teacher training through, degrees, courses and postgraduate courses.

The weaknesses: lack of legislation adapted to pre-university education, unskilled staff or lack of performance indicators.

The opportunities: to carry out projects from European funds regarding the legislative system, awarding teachers who carry out school activities and extra-curricular activities, to develop qualitative improvement programs, to participate in symposia and training courses at international level.

The threats: non-involvement of local communities in administrative problems or their involvement in issues that are strictly educational, lack of material resources as a result of the lack of programs for accessing European funds, elaboration of concrete evidence regarding teachers' activity and lack of transparency of programs for continuous training.

Correctly addressing the identified problems would reduce the risks for the internal environment of pre-university education and improve the pre-university education system. For example, at the level of a technological high school the SWOT analysis can be seen as follows:

Strong points:

- Good student education, which allows everyone to have future choices;
- Applying modern methods in the educational process;
- The profile of the classes in accordance with the requirements of the labor market;
- Attracting students to make performance;
- Students desire for knowledge;
- Large number of tenured teachers;
- Existence of computer laboratories, workshops on specializations;
- Equipping with machines and installations;
- The existence of the school site, which allows for better communication
- Responsiveness and transparency of managers, balanced management;
- A relaxed atmosphere, of mutual trust, in a clean environment;
- Communication and opening for students;
- Well-trained teachers, competent, qualified auxiliary teaching staff
- Good didactic - material ICT provision;
- Internet connection;
- Active Partnerships;
- Educational offer adapted to the training needs identified on the labor market;
- Existence of the Cabinet Standards of Participation for Active Citizenship;
- Constant preoccupation for promoting the school image;
- Programs to prevent abandonment, absenteeism, alcohol, tobacco, etc.;
- Programs for endowment of the school with European funds, as well as practical training abroad.

Weak points:

- Insufficient support from some departments for extracurricular activities.
- Conservatism of some teachers in the use of modern strategies;
- Formalism present in certain activities;
- Absence of responsibility in the decisional and educational act;
- Overlapping requirements, testing, resulting in unequal distribution of student effort;
- Not making maximum use of human and material resources;
- Lack of legislation tailored to school needs;
- Insufficient performance indicators.

Opportunities:

- Areas: Services and Agriculture are priority and growing at a local and regional level;
- Qualifications in Mechanical Engineering seem attractive;
- Continuing training courses by the Department of the Teaching Body and universities;
- Decentralizing education and increasing the degree of institutional autonomy;
- Possibility to change the mentality of both teachers and parents in the interest of students;
- Collaboration with the Local Council and City Hall for the realization of investment projects;
- Promoting equal opportunities;
- The possibility of carrying out practical training in areas other than the economic one but also

- other projects based on European funds related to endowment and improvement of the study conditions or their modernization,
- Development of training programs as well as participation in international training courses.
 - Autonomy in managing extra-budgetary resources

Threats:

- Insufficient budget resources;
- Low motivation of teachers;
- The computerized distribution of gymnasium graduates based on pupils' school results and without any relation to their skills;
- The precarious material situation of some rural families;
- Lack of respect and consideration of the responsible factors for the teacher profession;
- The disinterest of some teachers for the development of the school, as well as for their own professional and managerial training;
- Legislative instability and of the curriculum in the education system;
- Decreasing the number of hours in some disciplines;
- Teacher mobility in some disciplines;
- Little funds for development.

Based on the SWOT analysis, pre-university education institutions should develop strengths, eliminate weaknesses, avoid threats and capitalize on opportunities.

Of course, this analysis is not relevant to the entire pre-university education system, it is just a model that helps us in forming a general view on how to evaluate performance in this area.

The reasons for the importance of ensuring the quality of education are the need to build trust in the capacity and performance of Romanian educational institutions, adaptation to European standards and norms for Romanian diplomas to be recognized internationally, and to improve the educational offer so that it meets the requirements from the market.

5. Conclusions

Education plays an important role in the current social environment because all aspects of education emphasize the quality and efficiency of educational systems and activities and of information - accounting systems.

Each institution, entity has a goal performance in the field. This performance is viewed differently by each individual depending on the object of activity and the purpose pursued. The performance of pre-university education institutions is closely related to quality and results. The SWOT analysis of the pre-university education system allows an overview of the quality of the activity of these institutions as well as of the performance in the management of the resources and the implementation of modern systems necessary for the strategic and decision-making management.

6. References

- Ristea A. L., V. I. Franc V. I., (2009), *Methods in Scientific Research*, Expert Publishing House, Bucharest;
- Chelcea S.,(2007), *Methods in Sociological Research. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods*, Economic Publishing House, Bucharest;
- Colasse B.,(2008), *L'analyse financiere de l'entreprise*, La Decouverte, Paris;
- Drăgușin C. P., (2016), *Financial-Accounting Management Financial-Accounting Management in the public Academic Education Institutions*, Economic Publishing House, Bucharest;
- Armstrong M.,(2014), *Performance Management: Key strategies and practical guidelines*, KoganPage Limited, Londra;
- Cucoș C., (2009), *Psychopedagogy*, Ediția a III – a, Polirom Publishing House, Iași.