

Romanian Educational Management from The Perspective of Generation Z

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Abstract

In the coming period, the academic and organizational environment will face a significant influx of students (graduates) members of Generation Z, developed, trained and educated under a strong influence of the democratic Western paradigm, which requires communication systems and techniques specific to the generation digital within the processes of educational management and organizational management. The main purpose of the article is to analyze students who are members of Generation Z from the perspective of the value orientations that characterize them, both in the form of a transversal approach and a longitudinal comparative perspective, to formulate some general guidelines regarding optimal educational management. The objective of the research is to observe the perceptions, beliefs and opinions of students who are members of Generation Z and to formulate some general guidelines regarding optimal educational management, respectively optimal organizational management, from their perspective.

Key words: educational management, Generation Z, post-materialism dimension, materialism dimension, mixed dimension

J.E.L. classification: M11

1. Introduction

The present research aims to identify the dynamics/trends of the manifestation of value orientations (from the perspective of the values of raising children and the orientation on the materialism - postmaterialism axis) at the level of the population in Romania, respectively of the generations in its composition, without aiming to highlight the relationship of cause-effect type or control of confounding variables.

Starting from the premise that the current research approach represents an opportunity and an opportunity to raise awareness and enrich knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation both for the researcher and for the research subjects, after the completion of the study the distribution of the research reports will be ensured, in order directly, to all the subjects of this research.

In this way, we aim to give a direct utility to the research approach, for the students who are members of Generation Z, it is useful for them to be aware of their own specificity, respectively the natural need to assume and manage the inherent generational differences.

The unprecedented dynamism that characterizes the social environment in which we operate requires organizations, and implicitly the people who occupy management positions, to have a high capacity to manage a complex of situations in continuous growth and diversification. The new socio-economic reality brings leaders to the situation of having to adapt their personal and group reaction capacity to situations that are often difficult to anticipate, respectively to show a flexible and adaptable approach to the avalanche of unexpected changes (Fayol, 2018).

The extent of the changes that characterize the current socio-economic context is determined both by the frequency of their manifestation, which is constantly increasing, and by the speed of diffusion of those changes at the societal level.

In this socio-economic context characterized by an accentuated volatility, the manager, whether treated from an individual perspective or through the prism of the collective one, is so involved in the achievement of social, economic and educational objectives that he has become a central figure, dedicating himself to his activity -numerous studies, compendiums, conferences or international congresses. Industrial, educational (school and university), sports, political and administrative organizations make, or should make, considerable efforts both for the identification and operationalization of the best forms of organization, and especially for the permanent improvement and perfection of the act of leadership and, implicitly, of the persons mandated to fulfill that role.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the design of the present research is a sequential, non-experimental one, in which we combine a transversal component, which involves research and analysis from the point of view of the value system of students who are members of Generation Z at the time current, and a longitudinal component, embodied in the comparative analysis of the value systems of different generations/of the Romanian population based on data obtained over a long period of time through repeated studies/waves, from the past to the present.

2. Literature review

The processes of individual evolution and social change are interconnected and influence the nature of society as a whole. Social continuity and social changes are related to the process of generational succession (Bocoş, 2013). Intergenerational value changes are characterized by the slowness of the process, the significant impact being noticeable in the long term. Different attitudinal perspectives between generations, determined mainly by experiencing different social and political circumstances, can lead to social changes through the process of natural replacement of generations, the study of the succession between them being used to understand the phenomenon of social change (Gavreliuc, 2019).

From an etymological perspective, the concept of management has its roots in the French language, the term *manage* having the meaning to manage, or from the Italian language, the term *maneggio* having the meaning of handling. In the English language we find the terms *to manage*, having the meaning of managing, leading, succeeding or succeeding, *management*, representing the activity of leading or administering existing resources in order to carry out processes that contribute to the achievement of established objectives, respectively *manager*, referring to the person who exercises the act of leadership, resource management and organization, coordination and verification of specific activities (Mintzberg, 2019).

From the perspective of management evolution, the manifestation of avant-garde trends, which have been maintained until now, such as planning, coordination, organization, control, the importance of interpersonal relationships, the importance of managers' skills, trends and practices that have been confirmed by managerial practice (Basanez, 2016). On the other hand, ideas and principles were promoted that, over time, proved their limits, being refuted by managerial theory and practice, relevant in this sense being the opinions related to the superiority of men or the exacerbated importance attributed to centralization and hierarchy. It should be noted that the art and science poses of the act of leadership are not mutually exclusive, being rather complementary (Muste, 2020).

Educational management as a field of study and practice emerged from the general theories of organizational management, being in the first stage a subfield of it applied to the educational sphere, later becoming an independent field based on the development of its own theories, models and principles (Albulescu, 2014).

Educational management represents a transdiscipline, a dynamic multidimensional concept, which incorporates specific characteristics of several disciplinary branches. The systemic approach to education cannot be limited only to the institutionalized education system, without taking into account the multitude of participants in the education process from related fields, such as the economic, cultural or political, respectively the existing interdependencies between these participants (Albulescu, 2014). In turn, a system in general, namely the education system in this particular case, represents a subsystem of the environment to which it belongs.

In essence, the education system in Romania cannot be observed independently of the analysis and observation of the interdependencies it has developed with the Romanian society as a whole (Basanez, 2016).

In order to attract, maintain and value members of different generations, organizational and academic environments are forced to understand the uniqueness of each generation, to create bridges between them and to transform the specificities of each generation into opportunities (Inglehart and Norris, 2011). Knowing what defines them, what expectations they have, how they think and act, what motivates them and what demotivates them, is a real advantage for economic and educational organizations.

The present study is an analysis in comparative progression on the importance that the Romanian population, respectively the generations in its composition, attribute to the Dimensions of Materialism and Postmaterialism.

3. Research methodology

The purpose of this research endeavor is to observe and analyze students who are members of Generation Z from the perspective of the value orientations that characterize them, both in the form of a transversal approach and a longitudinal comparative perspective, to formulate some general guidelines regarding optimal educational management, respectively to optimal organizational management from their perspective, as well as shaping the profile of the current/future student - member of Generation Z, respectively the profile of the current/future employee - member of Generation Z, which, in the end, we expect to contribute to awareness of the need, assuming and approaching organizational and educational management in accordance with the value specificity of the new generation.

Objective 1: to study/identify the dynamics of child-rearing values and the dynamics of orientation on the materialism-post-materialism axis at the level of Romanian society, respectively of the generations in its composition (under 29 years, 30-49 years and over 50 years).

Objective 2: study/identify the value orientations that characterize the students who are members of Generation Z, including from the point of view of biological gender differences, from the perspective of the values of raising children and the orientation on the axis materialism - postmaterialism.

Objective 3: observing and analyzing the students who are members of Generation Z compared to the Romanian society from the point of view of the values of raising children and the orientation on the axis materialism - postmaterialism. *Objective 4.* Studying the perceptions, beliefs and opinions of students who are members of Generation Z and formulating some general guidelines regarding optimal educational management, respectively optimal organizational management, from their perspective.

General hypothesis: there are significant differences between students who are members of Generation Z and people with higher education in Romanian society from the point of view of the values of raising children and the orientation on the axis materialism - postmaterialism.

In order to have a multi-faceted perspective on the axiological evolution of Romanian society, it was necessary:

- ✓ a longitudinal comparative investigation of the dynamics of the values of raising children and the dynamics of orientation along the materialism-post-materialism axis that characterizes Romanian society as a whole on the one hand and on the other the generations in its composition (under 29 years, 30-49 years and over 50 years);
- ✓ a transversal analysis of the values of raising children and the orientation on the materialism-post-materialism axis that characterizes students who are members of Generation Z.

In non-experimental studies, having a longitudinal design, the observation and analysis of a cause-effect relationship can be taken into account to the extent that changes in the cause variable (the value system of students who are members of Generation Z) precede changes in the effect variable (the value system of the national population), a phenomenon known as the temporal antecedence of the cause variable compared to the effect variable

Complementary to the quantitative data obtained within the current research approach by applying the questionnaire to the targeted population, the World Values Survey studies provide the data base necessary for the application of the quantitative methodology.

We cannot say the same with regard to the studies or researches that had as their object the students who are members of Generation Z in Romania, a fact that justifies the combined application of quantitative and qualitative methodology in the process of obtaining data on them.

The use of a combined qualitative and quantitative methodology confers a number of benefits regarding:

- ensuring the complementarity of the research act by complementing and mutually supporting the qualitative methodology with the quantitative one;
- the staged development of research, in the sense in which the qualitative methodology complements and completes the quantitative one;
- verification and certification of the results obtained after analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data

Related to the intrinsic characteristics of the research within this research approach, the method will be used - in the form of the techniques and procedures used in the data collection process necessary for the research - the survey based on a questionnaire, containing:

- closed/standardized questions that ensure mathematical rigor, the possibility of establishing firm samples, respectively the validity and generalization of the results at the level of the entire population of students who are members of Generation Z, from which the sample was drawn;;
- open questions, a qualitative approach through the lens of the type of data collected and their analysis and interpretation, which provides an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the population sample extracted from the population of students who are members of Generation Z, the research data being valid, but not providing the possibility of being generalized to the entire population from which the sample was drawn;

The sample represents the part of the population that is actually the object of the research and is selected from the entire population of interest. From the perspective of the volume, the sample must be sufficiently numerically reduced to ensure the reduction of the financial and time costs necessary to be allocated, but at the same time sufficiently extensive to ensure the representativeness of the research. In the present research, the specificity of the population is represented by the existence of a high number of members, having a heterogeneous composition and a national territorial dispersion.

The sampling process took into account the method of data acquisition. The questionnaire-based investigation involves the application of the questionnaire to a certain part of the entire target population (in this case, students who are members of Generation Z), a group of people known as the sample.

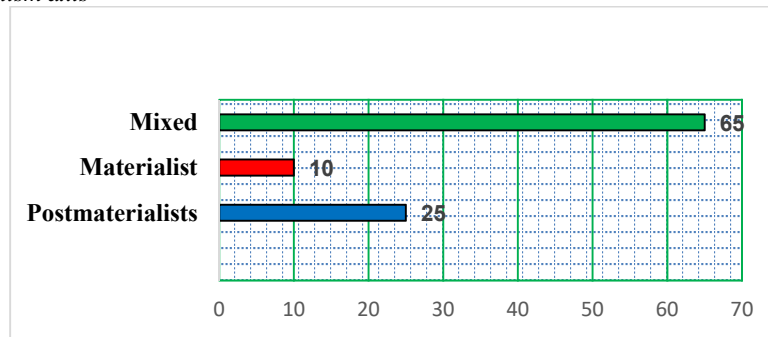
Analyzing the manifestation of the Dimensions of Materialism and Postmaterialism at the level of the population of students who are members of Generation Z that were the subject of this research presupposed the delimitation and grouping of the answers to the questions: There is a lot of discussion about the things that must be given priority in our country in the next 10 years. If you had to choose, which of the following things do you think is more important? and What would be the second most important thing? as follows:

- 1) *the post-materialism dimension* – the answers that mentioned as priorities for the next 10 years the items: People have a harder word to say about the important decisions of the government and Protecting freedom of speech;
- 2) *the materialism dimension* – the answers that mentioned as priorities for the next 10 years the following items: Maintaining order in the country and the fight against price increases;
- 3) *the mixed dimension* – the answers that mentioned as priorities for the next 10 years an item associated with the materialism dimension and one with the postmaterialism dimension.

4. Findings

From the total of 604 valid responses, 150 were associated with the postmaterialism dimension, representing a percentage of 24.83%, 63 were associated with the materialism dimension, representing a percentage of 10.43%, and the difference of 391 were associated with the mixed dimension, representing a percentage of 64.74%. (Figure 1).

Figure no. 1. Orientation of students who are members of Generation Z on the materialism – postmaterialism axis



Source: developed by the authors based on the collected data

The breakdown by gender reveals that (Table 1):

- 1) *Postmaterialism dimension* – of the 150 associated answers, 119 come from female subjects, representing 24.24% of the total of 491 female students, the difference of 31 coming from male subjects, representing 27.43%, from the total of 113 male students participating in the research;
- 2) *Materialism dimension* – of the 63 associated answers, 56 come from female subjects, representing 11.41% of the total of 491 female students, the difference of 7 answers coming from male subjects, representing 6.19% of the total of 113 male students participating in the research;
- 3) *The mixed dimension* - of the 391 associated responses, a number of 316 come from female subjects, representing 64.36% of the total of 491 female students, the difference of 75 coming from male subjects, representing 66.37% of the total of 113 male students participating in the research.

Table no. 1. Postmaterialism, materialism and mixed dimensions

Categories	Dimension Postmaterialism	Dimension Materialism	Mixed size
Female (F)	24.24%	11.41%	64.36%
N (Sample F)	491	491	491
Male (M)	27.43%	6.19%	66.37%
N (Sample M)	113	113	113
Difference M ¹⁵ -F	3.19	5.22	2.01
Significance threshold (p)	p=0.4795	p=0.1020	p=0.6870

Source: developed by the authors based on the collected data

The comparative analysis according to gender reveals that:

- ✓ related to the post-materialism dimension, the male students of Generation Z mentioned to a higher extent the associated answer options compared to the female ones, the difference in absolute terms being 3.19 percentage points, the confidence interval associated with the difference (95%) including the value 0 (-5.19 to 12.75), the associated significance threshold being p=0.4795;
- ✓ related to the materialism dimension, female students of Generation Z mentioned to a higher extent the associated response options compared to male students, the difference in absolute terms being 5.22 percentage points, the confidence interval associated with the difference (95%) including the value 0 (-1.32 to 9.65), the associated significance threshold being p=0.1020;
- ✓ related to the Mixed Dimension, the male students of Generation Z mentioned to a higher extent the associated answer options compared to the female ones, the difference in absolute terms being 2.01 percentage points, the confidence interval associated with the difference (95%) including the value 0 (-7.99 to 11.14), the associated significance threshold being p=0.6870.

From the perspective of gender differences, related to the Postmaterialism and Mixed Dimensions male Generation Z students mention to a higher extent the associated response options compared to female students, while related to the Materialism Dimension male Generation Z students female mention to a higher extent the associated answer options compared to male students (all three differences are statistically insignificant).

5. Conclusions

In the framework of this research, the observation and comparative analysis of the materialism-postmaterialism orientation was used for reasons related to the relevance of the understanding and awareness of the manifestation of the two dimensions (materialism and postmaterialism) within the processes of communication and management of related intergenerational relationships educational management and organizational management, respectively for reasons related to the facilitation of intragenerational and intergenerational longitudinal analyses.

The present research approach assumed the use of quantitative and qualitative research in a complementary manner, in the form of methodological pluralism, an approach that ensured more flexibility regarding the type of data collected and a balanced reporting at the initial level of knowledge of the researched subject, namely students who are members of Generation Z.

The weighted results of the present research are positioned in the upward trend of manifestation at the level of the entire society of the Postmaterialism Dimension, respectively in the global decreasing trend of the Materialism Dimension.

Generation Z students consider themselves more open and tolerant, characterized by superior technological skills and a higher level of independence and initiative compared to previous generations. At the same time, they expect the older generations to be more open to the new and to what is different, that is, to be non-judgmental and more tolerant of future generations. It is worth noting that the aspects that they consider to differentiate them from previous generations are those that they expect their members to accept and understand.

As a general conclusion, it can be stated that the nature and quality of educational and organizational management will depend on the extent to which teachers, respectively the current class of managers, will be aware of and take into account the specificity and characteristics of students who are members of Generation Z, respectively the needs and their expectations.

If universities or economic agents are interested in establishing solid relations with this generation, it is necessary to develop two-way relations of acceptance and sharing of perceptions and experiences, to learn from each other, so as to ensure a gradual leveling of the gaps between generations, respectively a complementary valorization of them. The main coordinates concern the central role played by technology in the lives of the members of this new generation, who claim flexibility and freedom of action to be able to innovate, expect direct, face-to-face dialogue with teachers and leaders of organizations, to identify concrete ways in which they can - establish and forecast their educational and professional path, under conditions of less hierarchy and more autonomy. If we do not seek to educate them and manage them by constantly referring to their needs and values, they will emigrate or consciously disengage from the educational field or the work field, which will lead to the existence of a human resource with a precarious level of training and/or to the aggravation of the lack of active labor force.

Limitations of the research - the numerical expansion of the student sample was not high enough to ensure national representativeness. Moreover, the representativeness of students who are members of Generation Z on development centers in this research is different from the representativeness according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics in Romania.

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