

Educational influence area of Roman municipality in the post-communist era

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Extended Abstract:

This scientific approach is part of a larger research on the school network in the area of influence of the Roman municipality in the post-communist period. In this sense, a stage of maximum importance for the analysis of the research topic is the delimitation of the area of educational influence of the Roman municipality. The time limit of 30 years refers to the period 1990 - 2020, answering with the post-communist period, when Romanian pre-university education made the transition from the centralized system of the communist period, in which the share of education prevailed over economic commands, to the "autonomous" system determined by the introduction of the concept funding per capita, when the need to provide funding based on the number of students has caused a clear decrease in the quality of the educational act. The chosen period is well delimited in time: the year of debut (1990) representing the year from which the pre-university education system was no longer organized according to the same rules as in the communist period, appearing a "liberalization" and to some extent a democratization of organization of the school network - the local authorities are starting to gain an increasing share among the decision-makers that determine the appearance / disappearance of some school units with legal personality within the territory under administration.

Roman is a second-tier city in the urban hierarchy of the North-East development region, being the second largest city in Neamț County, with a resident population of 68,653 inhabitants in 2020 (cf. Romania 2020 Statistical Yearbook). From the point of view of educational services, the power of polarization of the municipality over the surrounding areas is obvious, given the diversity of educational offer and the historical trend of orienting the population towards educational, medical or administrative-financial services offered by this urban centre. The area of influence of the Romanian municipality taken into account for the present scientific approach has been delimited starting from the

computerized distribution of the ninth-grade students, which provides clear information on the place of origin of the students. In the area of influence of Roman municipality there are administrative-territorial units whose school network allows students to attend school in the place of residence, but it is obvious that the educational offer of the respective educational units does not cover the training needs of educators in that administrative unit. In the context in which the number of places and specializations offered at local level is limited, the students are redirected to the nearest urban centre, in this case to the Roman municipality.

The analysis of the schooling figure cannot be performed separately from the school network in the targeted area. The type of school unit directly influences the number of students, and the indicators that have a direct impact on the number of students differ precisely depending on the level of schooling and the distance from the main attraction that is manifested in the area of educational services. In fact, the school network cannot exist independently of the schooling figure which is the most accurate picture from the demographic point of view of any analyzed region. This statement is based on the fact that for the age groups from 3 years to 18/19 years are known the situation of each child from the date and place of birth to territorial mobility. To establish the area of educational influence of the Roman municipality were used data provided by the Sport High School (a vocational high school, which includes all levels of study), the Technological High School "Vasile Sav" Roman (a technological high school, which includes primary, secondary and secondary - high school and vocational school) and the Technical College "Miron Costin" Roman (a technological high school, which teaches only high school classes and vocational school). In the school year 2014-2015, a computerized national system of student records was introduced, which involved connecting all schools in Romania. In this way, the educational route and the territorial mobility of the students were followed with maximum accuracy. Therefore, in order to correctly identify the territorial boundaries of the area of influence of the Roman municipality, the data provided by the high school units in the city for the period 2014-2020 were used. The main hypothesis from which this approach starts is that the current school network predisposes to the appearance of obvious territorial disparities between rural and urban, disparities reflected in the size of the school unit, in the level of schooling offered within each administrative unit and in the direction and size of migratory flows between two types of environments. It is obviously that the urban area is advantaged as opposed to rural area due to the diversity of schools and of their educational offer.

Starting from the main working hypothesis, namely that there are differences in size and level of education between rural schools and the Roman municipality, several directions were outlined that were considered in this analysis, namely:

- in rural areas, the main indicator that influences the number of students is the birth rate, while in urban areas, student migration becomes the defining factor for the number of secondary schools' students.
- territorial mobility of the students is inversely proportional to the distance between the analysed administrative-territorial unit and the Roman municipality.
- territorial mobility of the students from the area of influence of the Roman municipality is determined by the level of education offered by the educational institutions from this urban centre.
- the number of schools in the urban environment and in the localities where a large share of the Roman Catholic population is registered, is highly influenced by the international migration.

To validate / invalidate the working hypotheses, the delimitation of the analysis area was considered, starting from the distribution of the students in the ninth grade. Roman secondary schools offer a wide range of qualifications, which is the main attraction for the school population around Roman. The unit of reference for the analysis of the student population is the commune. Therefore, all the analyzed indicators will be reported to the higher administrative-territorial unit, in this case the commune.

Nowadays, students have a high territorial mobility, visible in terms of quantitative flow, represented by the large number of commuting students who travel various distances to benefit from higher forms of education. As the schooling figure is strictly related to the school network and the reception basin of the Roman municipality, the physical distance, expressed in kilometres, and the distance-time, expressed in minutes, compared to the Roman municipality were taken into account.

As said before, the present scientific approach aims to delimit the area of influence in the field of educational services of the Roman municipality, starting from the home of the students enrolled in the secondary education units. In pre-school and primary education there are students living in other territorial administrative units than the Roman municipality, but their share in the total number of students in secondary schools is low. In the case of high school and vocational students, the decision to study in this city is influenced by the lack of higher education schools in the localities of origin.

One of the most interesting results of the current approach is that the educational influence of the city largely overlaps over the former Roman County, extending beyond the boundaries of Neamț County, developing on the territory of Bacău, Vaslui and Iași counties. The former Roman County was valid until 1950, when the Soviet-type influence determined a region following this pattern: regions, districts, and communes. After 1968, Romania returns to counties, the traditional territorial administrative division, but their number was reduced to half that of the interwar period. This is rather a regional perception of territorial polarization, reminiscent of the polarization area on the territory of the former administrative area of the Roman region, of urban node in a large rural area. Thus, the local

area of influence of the Roman municipality proves to be extremely stable in time and space. Moreover, the municipality role as an urban centre was consolidated in his area of influence by diversifying the city's functions and it is limited by the 67' isochrone around the city.