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Quality in Education

**Education Policy, Applied Language Learning, and
Economic Development**

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Abstract: The article highlights the historical and pragmatic perspective on the culture patterns shift through language learning as an instrument of social and economic development. It outlines language learning as human and professional capital for social progress and economic growth through cultural patterns shift. It deals with the Romanian experience of language learning and education policies in the late XIX and early XX century in making culture values work for the human society and economic growth.

Keywords: education policies; language learning; cultural values transfer; economic development; human capital

Motto: “When school flourishes, all flourishes (Martin Luther)

1. Language Learning Policy: a Pragmatic Approach

The history of the European languages use has always been complex and changing.

Russian has been extensively used in Eastern Europe, along with German and Polish; French in trade areas of Africa, and Spanish in Latin America, according to the political conditions, economic interests and cultural exchanges.² Nevertheless, in modern times, English has become undoubtedly, the *lingua franca*³ of politics, science, communication, culture development and cross culture events, international markets access, etc.

The link between the language skills, cultural awareness and the successful international business relationship is clearly established by statistics: on the basis of the sample, it is estimated that 11% of exporting European small SMEs⁴ (945,000 companies) lose their business because of identified communication and cultural barriers⁵.

The anthropological research on communication, cultural values and their influence on business patterns has been carried out and outlined by a remarkable theoretical infrastructure which makes possible the planning of the economic development of the Union and make it a dynamic and

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² ELAN Project, 2010-2013: Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise: “Language skills will be important in achieving European policy goals, particularly against a background of increasing global competition”.

³ A third language that is distinct from the native language of both parties involved in the communication.

⁴ Small and medium-sized enterprises – as defined in EU law.

⁵ Ibidem.

competitive global partner. Language learning is part of knowledge investment, the instrument to foster social progress, cultural integration, and economic growth through the development of human capital. Language learning is the instrument of the successful development of knowledge based economy by fostering the direct access to knowledge education, research and business communication.

1.1. Economic, Social and Culture Values through Language Learning

Moral and religious principles, work motivation, attitude on education, family, and gender are language imbedded elements which make the language an open door to the business culture values transfer. The process of economic, social and culture value transfer is facilitated by the instrument of language which carries the otherness of social and professional dimensions and economic standards resulting from the specific historical evolution of its native speaking nation.

Business cultural awareness makes room to the flexible attitude, tolerance and cultural intelligence which translate gradually into economic and political development options. An appropriate focus on language learning will result in a silent revolution of economic development and a major intergenerational shift in cultural values of post materialist value priorities of life quality. (Inglehart, Ronald, 1977, pp. 3-66)

The process of cultural values transfer has also the power to support the self cultural values awareness and the development of desired political, social and economic improvements. The professional need to communicate effectively in a foreign language can speed up the process and contribute to the change of the native cultural and economic patterns through improved work motivation, religious beliefs, social attitude, and political choice.

An appropriate educational policy and language learning strategy result in far-reaching, long lasting economic implications.

1.2. Romanian Experience: The Education Policies and the Cultural Break-Through

The identification of goal, commitment to long term perspective, investment in human resources can make developing countries break out of the cycle of underperformance. Education and language learning proved to be the most effective way of promoting and making culture values work for the human society through changing behaviors, attitudes and shared knowledge. (Fairbanks; Lindsey, 1997, pp. 121-221)

The European Enlightenment ideas were a source for the development of a powerful cultural movement in Romania of the XVIII and XIX century in social, economic and political areas. The country breaking away from the Ottoman Empire in 1877 and its independent political strengthening were paved by the new cultural environment and elites in the two principalities which contributed to the raise of awareness of the Romanian cultural identity and to the broad understanding and enhancement of education for social, economic and political performance. The steps taken for the development of a new educational approach led to the rapid change of cultural and political patterns. The union of the two principalities followed shortly.

The social educational effort to split away from the pre-modern backward stage was not fully successful but until late XIX century when coherent change and reform developed a strong human capital: the intellectual elite were successful in raising cultural identity awareness. Nicolae Iorga said that „*schooling aims full training of man to face, understand and manage his life challenges, make him*

smart and champion, but honorable, kindhearted, and gentle” which translates into „Romanian formal schooling aims reform its cultural identity but also match the western European cultural values and standards”.(Iorga, 1971, Motto)

The economic, social and cultural developments that followed the split away of Romania from the “sick man of Europe” (name given to the Ottoman Empire by Alexander the 1st, the Russian czar, referring to its fall) – is the result of the direct access to the Western culture through language learning in the late XIX century.

The major phenomenon of intergenerational shift in the cultural values (Inglehart; Welzel, pp. 48-135) is measured by the far-reaching economic and social developments which brought out new political options and institutions specific to the Western culture. (Inglehart; Welzel, pp. 173-210)

2. Language Learning and Cultural Patterns

Arsenie Vlaicu¹ was the first to search and publish specific language pedagogy for the Romanian schools in 1899. (Negrea, 2006, pp. 50-52) Language syllabus improvements were permanently added to meet the specific communication needs of school girls and boys. French keeps the first rank of working language until early XX century when English replaces it due to the tremendous development of business relationship with the British Empire. The new linguistic policies and pedagogical strategies opened opportunities for the new generations to shift their cultural patterns through language learning, as part of ideas, customs, skills, work attitude. (Emmitt & Pollock, 1997, p. 47; Allright & Bailey, 1991, p. 193) The language learning trained young Romanians to open up to cultural otherness and to strengthen their own native cultural values.

2.1 ...and Economic Impact

The raise of cultural awareness, tolerance and openness is a source of coherent and predictable economic development; political understanding and cooperation that make human society evolve towards autonomy, equality and democracy.

The very few facts show the opportunities that cultural openness, education and language instruction can develop.

In 1912 the Romanian Prince George Valentin Bibescu opens the first military and then, civil airplane pilot school on a former air field where the French pioneers Louis Bleriot in 1909 and Romanian Aurel Vlaicu in 1910, make their public flights by planes built by them. In 1920 a joint-venture Romanian-French air company is set, the first in Europe to transport goods and passengers across the Atlantic. In 1923 Băneasa airport is built, the second ranked in Europe, which is renewed and extended between 1947-1952.

Carol Davila, a scientist doctor and inventor, studied medicine at the University of Paris, and he organized the first military medical service and the public health system in Romania. He founded, together with Nicolae Kretzulescu, the National School of Medicine and Pharmacy in 1857, the medical health care system in Romania, and the Red Cross organization. Davila is also credited with the invention of the Davila tincture for the treatment of cholera and some specific medicine for digestive disease.

¹ Teacher of the Commercial High School in Brasov; task force member for the first issue of the Romanian Encyclopedia (1898-1904).

The domain of biological, geological, anthropology and speology research were developed by Emil Racoviță who participated on the Belgian Antarctic Expedition Belgica, together with Roald Amundsen, the Belgian physicist Emile Danco, the Polish geologists Henryk Arctowski and Antoni Boleslaw Dobrowolski and the American physician Frederick Cook. He was a teacher at the University of Cluj where he settled and developed the first department of biospeology in the world.

The Romanian Darwinist biologist, Grigore Antipa continued his professor's work and studied the fauna of the Delta Danube and the Black Sea. He was the founder and the director of the Bucharest Natural History Museum, which now bears his name. Additionally, Antipa was a specialist in zoology, ichthyology, ecology and oceanography. He was a university professor, member of the Romanian Academy and several other academies in the world. He was the first Romanian to explore the North Pole.

The first Romanian forensic scientist, and criminal anthropology, the founder of the Institute of Legal Medicine in Romania in 1892, and of the modern medico-legal system, was one of the most prominent personalities in this field of activity in Europe at that time. He was the first to develop the concept of the morgue and created the term "legal medicine" and the medical domain of forensic research.

Anghel Saligni, a Romanian descendant of a French immigrant family from Alsace, pursued engineering studies in Germany and then contributed to the construction of railways in Saxony. He was a founding member of the Bucharest Polytechnic Society (the precursor to today's Bucharest Polytechnic Institute and was appointed a Minister of Public Works. In 1892, he was elected a member of the Romanian Academy, and he served as its president between 1907 and 1910. He drew the plans and built the first mixed-use (railway and highway) bridges in Romania, but his most important work was the King Carol I Bridge over the Danube that became the longest bridge in Europe, and the third longest bridge in the world. The structure was famous for the time, competing with Gustave Eiffel's engineering works. He also planned and built the first silos in the world made of reinforced concrete, which are still preserved today in Constanța, Brăila, and Galați. In the port of Constanța he designed a special pool to allow oil export and two silos for grain export...

2.2. Time to Remember and Make It Work Again...

In the early XIX century, the Romanian economy was broadly agrarian, with a poor industry and urbanization, and a scarce commercial exchange based on high cost raw materials export and expensive end products import. The low professional profile of the Romanian population and the South-East cultural values made the economic and cultural gap from the Western European countries even deeper.

But the late European Enlightenment influence on the Romanian principalities carried out through French, German and British language learning policies and educational reforms of the early XIX century, proved its economic efficiency. The language-embedded cultural values learning contributed to the cultural shift of a different work attitude and consideration. It was the time to understand and make cultural values bridge civilizations through education and language learning. It is the time to remember and make it work again...

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